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"Get him a mirror."

Andiron Tales

By

John Kendrick Bangs



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TRANSFER FROM C.P.

ILLUSTRATIONS

BY CLARE VICTOR DWIGGINS

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ANDIRON TALES

By John Kendrick Bangs

Being the Remarkable Adventures of a Boy with a Lively Imagination

CHAPTER I.

Tom and the Andirons

IT was perfectly natural in one respect, anyhow. There was really no reason in the world why Tom should not lie upon the great bear-skin rug in front of the library fire those cold winter nights if he wanted to, nor need anyone be surprised that he should want to. It was indeed a most delightful place to lie in. The bear-skin was soft and in every way comfortable and comforting. The fireplace itself was one of those huge hospitable affairs that might pass in some apartment houses in our narrow cooped-up city streets for a butler's pantry or small reception room—in fact in the summer time Tom used to sit in the fireplace and pretend he was in his office transacting business with such of his sister's dolls as could be induced to visit him there; giving orders to imaginary clerks and bookkeepers and keeping an equally fanciful office boy continually on the run. And then apart from the rug and the fireplace it was a

beautiful room in which they were. Tom's father was very fond of books, and, although he was a great many years older than Tom, he had not forgotten how to enjoy the very same kind of books that Tom liked. He was not ashamed to have one little niche of his library filled with the stories which had delighted him in his boyhood days, and which still continued to please him, and, of course, this lent an additional charm to the library in Tom's eyes. It held his heroes, and on some of those drowsy nights when the only sounds to break the stillness of the room were the scratching of his father's pen, the soft humming of some little tune by his mother sitting and sewing by the evening lamp, and the fierce crackling of the burning logs, Tom could almost see these heroes stepping down from the shelves and like so many phantoms flitting in and about the room. In fact, upon one occasion, Tom is convinced he did see these very people having a dance upon the great tiled hearth—but of that you shall hear later.

There were many other things in the library beside his heroes that interested Tom. There was a little Japanese ivory god that used to sit up on the mantel shelf and gaze wisely at him, as much as to say, "Dear me, boy, what a lot I could tell you if I only would!" Then, too, there was a very handsome vase on top of one of the book-cases that had two remarkable dragons climbing up its sides, the tail of one of them so fixed that if anyone chose to use the vase for a pitcher the tail would make a very convenient handle, at which the other dragon always appeared to be laughing heartily, which he had no reason to do, because his own tail was not arranged any too gracefully. But the things that, next to Jack the Giant Killer, and Beauty and the Beast, and Tom Thumb and his other heroes

and heroines, Tom liked the most, were two great brazen Andirons that stood in the fireplace. To Tom these Andirons, though up to the night when our story begins he had never seen them move, seemed almost to live. They had big, round, good-natured faces, that shone like so much gold. Their necks were slight and graceful, but as they developed downward toward their handsome feet the Andirons grew more portly, until finally they came to look very much like a pair of amiable sea serpents without much length. Tom's uncle said they looked like cats, with sunflowers for heads, swan necks for bodies, and very little of the cat about them save the claws. This description made Tom laugh, but the more he thought about it the more truthful did it seem to him to be.

For so long a time as Tom could remember, summer and winter, those Andirons had sat staring stolidly ahead in their accustomed place, and not until that December night had they even so much as winked at him—but on that occasion they more than made up for all their previous silence and seeming unsociability. Tom was lying on the rug, as usual, and I am afraid was almost asleep. The logs were burning fiercely and at first Tom thought that the words he heard spoken were nothing but their crackling and hissing, but in a minute he changed his mind about that for the very good reason that the "Lefthandiron"—as Tom's uncle once called it—winked his eye at Tom and said:

"Hullo, Sleepyhead."

Tom only returned the wink. He was too much surprised to say anything.

"His name isn't Sleepyhead," said the Righthandiron, with a grin. "It's Thomas D. Pate."

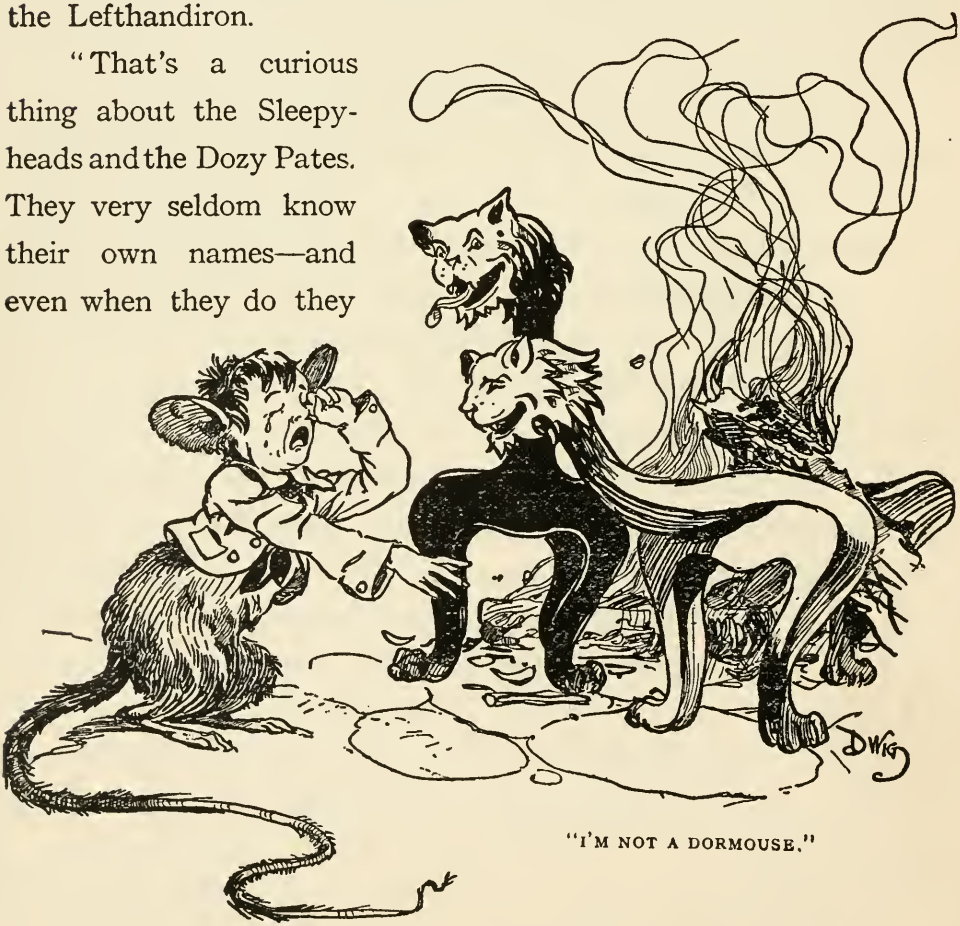
"What's the D for?" asked the other.

"Dozy—Thomas Dozy Pate," exclaimed the Righthandiron. "His ancestors were Sleepyheads on his mother's side, and Dozy Pates on his father's side."

" 'Tisn't so at all!" cried Tom, indignantly. "My mama wasn't a Sleepyhead, and my name isn't Dozy Pate."

"He's such a Sleepyhead he doesn't know his own name," said the Lefthandiron.

"That's a curious thing about the Sleepyheads and the Dozy Pates. They very seldom know their own names—and even when they do they



"I'M NOT A DORMOUSE."

always deny that they are what they are. Why I really believe if I told Tom here that he was a Dormouse he'd deny it and say he was a boy."

"I am a boy," said Tom, stoutly, "and I'm not a Dormouse."

Both of the Andirons laughed heartily at this, and the Right-handiron, dancing a little jig, sang over and over again this couplet:

"He can't be very smart, I wis,
If he can't see that's what he is.'

"Get him a mirror," said the Lefthandiron. "We can't blame him for thinking he is a boy, because everybody has told him he is a boy except ourselves, and being a Sleepyhead he believes as a rule what he is told if it is pleasant to believe."

"Well, I can't see why he objects to being a Dormouse," said the Righthandiron. "I think Dormice are very handsome and just too sweet and amiable to live. They are much pleasanter mice than Windowmice and Stairmice—don't you think so?"

"Indeed I do," returned the Lefthandiron, "and Tom is about the finest Dormouse I ever saw, and I wish he'd let us get acquainted with him."

"So do I," said the other, "but if he doesn't it's his own loss. You and I can go off to Santa Clausville by ourselves and have quite as good a time, if not better, than if he were along with us. I've noticed one thing, my dear Lefty, two's best anyhow.

"Two people in an omnibus
Where there's but one settee,
Can both be seated with less fuss
Than if the twain were three.

"If there is candy for but four,
This maxim still holds true,
Each one will get so much the more
If there are only two.

"Two boys upon a teeter board
Can have just twice the fun
That any seesaw can afford
If there's another one.

"So I say, what if he doesn't come? You and I will enjoy ourselves just as much. There'll be more candy for us, we won't have to divide the good time we have up into more than two parts, and, what is more, neither of us will have to carry the Dormouse."

Here the two Andirons gave a sidelong glance at Tom, and saw that he was smiling.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the Righthandiron. "Eh, Dormouse?"

"If I'll be a Dormouse will you take me off on your good time with you?" asked Tom.

"Certainly, but we can't take anybody who denies that he is what he is or who says that his name doesn't belong to him."

"But I can't tell a story," said Tom.

"Nobody asked you to," returned the Righthandiron. "All we ask is that you'll say nothing about it. If we say your name is Sleepyhead you needn't try to make people think we don't know what we are talking about by saying that your name isn't Sleepyhead, but Tommy Wideawake, or Billy Lemonstick, or something else; and when we choose to state that you are a Dormouse we want you to be a Dormouse and not go crying out through the street, 'I am a

huckleberry.' In the countries we visit people think we are the wisest of the wise, and what we say no one ever dares dispute."

"So, you see, my dear Dormouse," said the other, "we couldn't possibly take you off with us unless you fall in with our plans and submit to our calling you anything we please."

"I don't see why you are not willing to admit that I am a boy, though," insisted Tom, who, although he was extremely anxious to go off with the Andirons, did not really like to lose sight of the fact that he was a boy. "What good does it do you or me or anybody else for me to admit that I am a Dormouse, for instance?"

"A little tail which I will wag for you," said the Righthandiron, "will explain how that is. Did you ever know a boy named Ebenezer J. Carrottop?"

"No, I never heard of any person with such an absurd name as that," returned Tom.

"Well, you are very fortunate not to have been one of Ebenezer's particular friends," said the Righthandiron. "If you had been, the story I am going to tell you would have made you very unhappy. As it is, not having known Eben-



"A LITTLE TALE WHICH I WILL WAG FOR YOU."

ezer, and, having in fact taken a dislike to him because of his name, the story will amuse you more than otherwise."

"Good," said Tom; "I like to be amused."

"That being the case," said the Andiron, "I will proceed at once to tell you the story of Ebenezer."

CHAPTER II.

The Story of Ebenezer

"EBENEZER was a boy very much like yourself in several ways," resumed the Righthandiron. "He wasn't one of the Sleepyhead or Dozy Pate families, but he was next thing to it. He was nephew of Senator Takeanap, and a grandson of old General Snoraloud—but he'd never admit it. He used to get just as angry when we reminded him that he was quite as much of a Snoraloud as a Carrottop, as you were when we called you Sleepyhead, and when my brother Lefty here said to him, 'Hullo, Weasel,' he didn't like it a bit better than you did when we said you were a Dormouse. He insisted that he was a boy, and for all we could do we couldn't get him to admit that he was a Weasel—"

"He was the most persistent lad
That I have ever seen.
He'd always say that bad was bad,
That blue could not be green.

"We couldn't get him to deny
That white was always white,
And though we'd try and try and try
He'd say that he was right,"

interrupted the Lefthandiron.

"And wasn't he?" asked Tom.

"That isn't a part of the story," snapped the Righthandiron, "and if you don't stop interrupting me I'll never speak to you again."

"I didn't mean to," said Tom apologetically.

"That's just the worst part of it," snapped the Andiron. "You are an interrupter by nature, and that is the most incurable kind. But, as I was telling you, Ebenezer was bound to be a boy, and no amount of talk on our part could convince him that he was a Weasel. Well, Lefty and I were very young then, and up to the time of which I am speaking we had always made our little trips in the Fairy Country or in Giantland all by ourselves, and we had lots of fun together I can warrant. This time, however, we decided to take Ebenezer with us to Giantland, which was a place he had often heard us tell about, and concerning which he was very curious. We told him that it would never do for him to visit Giantland, because the Giants were always very hungry, and liked nothing better to eat than a boy like himself. It would be dangerous for him to go, we said, unless he would promise to obey us in everything we told him to do, and to admit that he was whatever we chose to call him."

"You see, my dear Tom," said the Lefthandiron in explanation, "the Giants had such confidence in us that they accepted as true anything we said, so that if we should happen to meet a hungry ogre and he should want to eat Ebenezer because he was a boy, all that would be necessary for us to do to save Ebenezer was to say, 'Hold on. He is not a boy. He is a Weasel.' Then Ebenezer would be all right, because Giants do not eat Weasels."

"I see," said Tom, nodding his head.

"Ebenezer promised that he would obey us and wouldn't deny that he was a Weasel if we told the Giants he was one, and we took him off with us," resumed the Righthandiron. "We went straight

to Giantland and had a perfectly lovely time until about an hour before it was time to return, when we encountered a huge Giant named Skihigh—and my, how hungry he was! He was hungrier than Lefty's friend, who went into a restaurant and ordered

"'Thirty-seven pounds of cake,
Sixty-four lamb chops,
Eighteen portions of beefsteak,
Forty ginger pops;
Seventeen vanilla puffs,
Twenty fresh-caught dabs,
Thirty-eight rich raisin duffs,
Ninety soft-shell crabs.

"'Let those go for course the first;
Let the second be
Shrimps and oysters till I burst,
Thirteen quarts of tea.
Then a dozen sugared hams,
One small cabbage head,
Ninety dozen pinky clams,
Sixty loaves of bread.

"'Seven quarts of French canned pease,
And a pound or two
Of your Gorgonzola cheese
For my lunch will do."
Then the waiter standing by
In the usual way
Asked him: 'Won't you also try
Our hot mince today?'"

"I don't want to interrupt," said Tom, "but it seems to me that man must have been awful rich."

'No, he wasn't," returned Lefty. "He was going to eat the



"AND THEN DIE WITHOUT PAYING FOR IT."

dinner, you know, and then die without paying for it. He wasn't a very good man."

"No," remarked the story-teller. "But he was a very hungry man, in which respect he was just like the Giant I am trying to tell you about. And my, how the Giant roared with glee when he caught sight of Ebenezer.

" 'Good!' he cried, 'that's just what I wanted for my lunch. A nice fat boy.'

"Then he reached down," said the Righthandiron, "and grabbed Ebenezer by the arm, and was about to eat him just as he would a piece of asparagus, when Lefty here cried out:

" 'Avast there, Skihigh! That isn't a nice fat boy. That is only a miserable Weasel.'

" 'Pah!' said Skihigh, with a face such as you put on when you take a horrid tasting medicine. 'Pah! I can't eat Weasels.'

"And with that he put Ebenezer down on the road again and was about to walk along about his business when what did that foolish little Ebenezer do but up and deny that he was a Weasel!

" 'I'm not a Weasel,' he yelled. 'And I am a boy—and a fine boy at that!'

"Skihigh stopped short, whirled about and rushed back to where Ebenezer was standing.

" 'What's that you say?' he said eagerly.

" 'I say I am not a Weasel, but a fine fat boy,' said the vainglorious Ebenezer stoutly.

" 'Then my friends, the Andirons have deceived me, have they?' roared the Giant.

" 'Yes,' replied Ebenezer. 'But I can't stand being called a Weasel.'



"JUST WHAT I WANTED FOR MY LUNCH."

"With that." said the Righthandiron, "Skihigh clapped Ebenezer into his market basket and then turned on Lefty and me. Lefty managed to get away, but I was caught."

"What did he do to you?" asked Tom, trembling with excitement.

"He tried to bite my head off," said Righty, with a laugh. "See those two dents on either side of my neck?'

Tom looked, and sure enough there were the dents —not very deep, but quite large enough to be seen.

"His teeth broke when he got that far," said Righty. "I'm pretty hard —but you see it needn't have happened at all if Ebenezer had only kept quiet about his not being a Weasel."



"TRIED TO BITE MY HEAD OFF."

"Was he eaten by Skihigh?" asked Tom.

"I don't know," replied Righty. "Lefty and I didn't wait to find out, and we have never been back there since. I don't believe he did eat him, for two reasons. One is that after trying to bite my head off Skihigh hadn't teeth enough left to eat anything with, and

the other reason is that I saw Ebenezer two years afterwards on his way to school one beautiful spring morning. I noticed him particularly because, although it was a lovely clear morning, he had his umbrella up and positively declined to put it down and carry it closed, because, he said, an umbrella couldn't possibly be a cane, and he wasn't going to try to make anybody suppose it was a cane."

"I don't see anything in that story to make me unhappy, even if I were a chum of Ebenezer's," said Tom, as the Andiron finished.

"You don't? Don't you think it was sad that the Giant couldn't eat a boy who'd behave in that way?" asked Righty, with a scornful glance at Tom.

"It was very sad, Tom," said the Lefthandiron. "So don't deny it—especially if you want to go off on our trip to the stars."

"Are you really going to the stars?" gasped Tom, breathless at the very idea and forgetting all about Ebenezer.

"Perhaps," returned the Andiron.

"And may I go with you?" whispered Tom.

"You may if you will do whatever we tell you, and admit that you are a Dormouse," said Righty.

"All right, I'll obey," said Tom.

"And what did you say your name was?" asked Lefty.

"Sleepyhead Dozy Pate Dormouse," said Tom, with a laugh.

"You'll do," returned the Righthandiron, stepping lightly out of the fireplace. "Now sit astride of my back and take hold of Lefty's right claw."

Tom did as he was told, and in an instant he was flying up through space toward the stars.

CHAPTER III.

Off in the Clouds

"NOW the point to be decided," said the Lefthandiron, after he and his companions had been flying through space for some time, "is where we are going. There are two or three things we can do, and Tom can have his choice as to which it shall be."

"Subject, of course, to my advice," said the Righthandiron, with a bow to Tom. "You can go where you please if I please. See?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I see. I can have my wav as long as it is your way."

"Precisely," said the Righthandiron, with an approving nod. "And as you may have heard, precisely means exactly so. You can have your way as long as it is my way, which shows how generous I am. Fond of my way as I am, I am willing to divide it with you."

"All right," returned Tom. "I'm very much obliged. What are the two things we can do?"

"Well," said the Lefthandiron, scratching his head softly, "we can fly up a little higher and sit down and watch the world go round; we can take the long jump, or we can visit Saturn."

"What was the first?" asked Tom.

"To fly up a little higher, where we can get a better view; to

sit down there and watch the world go round. It is an excellent way to travel. It's awfully easy—in fact, it isn't you that travels at all. It's the world that does the traveling, while all you've got to do is to sit down there and keep an eye on it. It's like a big panorama, only it's real, and any time you see a place going by that you think you'd like to see more of, all you've got to do is to fly down there and see it."

"When you get up higher and sit down," said Tom, "what do you sit on?"

"You sit on me and I sit on my hind legs, of course," said Lefthandiron. "Don't you know anything?"

"Of course I do," said Tom, indignantly. "I know lots of things."

"Then I can't see why you ask such silly questions," retorted the Lefthandiron. "What do we sit on? Why, you might just as well ask a dog what he barks with, or a lion what he eats his breakfast with—and that would be as stupid as the Poker's poem on Sandwiches."

"Did the Poker write a poem on Sandwiches?" asked Tom.

"Eight of 'em," returned the Lefthandiron. "The first of them went this way:

"He sat upon a lofty hill,
And smoked his penny pipe.
'Ha!' quoth a passing whip-poor-will,
'The oranges are ripe.'"

"The other seven went like this," observed the Righthandiron:

"The day was over, and the six-
Teen little darkies then
Found they were in a dreadful fix,
Like several other men."

"There isn't anything about Sandwiches in those poems," said Tom, with a look of perplexity on his face.

"No. That's where the stupidity of it comes in. He wrote those poems and called 'em all Sandwiches just to be stupid, and it was stupid."

"But what did he want to be stupid for?" asked Tom.

"Just his vanity, that's all," said the Righthandiron. "The Poker is a very vain person. He thinks he is superior to everybody else in everything. If you say to him, 'the gas fixture is bright tonight,' he'll say, 'Oh, yes—but I'm brighter.' Somebody told him once that the kindling wood that started the fires was stupid, and he wouldn't even stop his bragging then. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'but I'm a great deal stupider than the kindling wood and I'll prove it.' So he sat down and wrote those verses and called 'em all Sandwiches, and everybody agreed that he was the stupidest person going."

"You only told me two of 'em," said Tom.

"No—the whole eight were there. To make it more stupid the Poker said that the first one was number five and the second was the other seven."

Tom smiled broadly at this and made up his mind to cultivate the acquaintance of the Poker. He was boy enough to like stupidity of that sort because it made him laugh.

"I'd like to meet the Poker," he said. "He must be lots of fun."

"He is," said the Lefthandiron. "Tenacre lots of fun. You'll meet him soon enough because we shall join him shortly. We never go off on any of our trips without him. He is a great help sometimes when we get into trouble just because he has so many sides. If we fall into a pit through some misstep the Poker comes along and pries us out of it. If we fall into the hands of some horrible creature that wants to hurt us, the Poker talks to that creature as stupid as he knows how, which makes the other so drowsy that he can't possibly keep awake, and then, of course, we escape."

"There he is now," cried the Righthandiron, putting his right forepaw up to his ear and listening attentively. "I can hear him singing, can't you?"

The Lefthandiron stopped short and Tom strained his ears to hear the Poker's song. For a moment he could hear nothing, but then a slight buzzing sound like the hum of a bee, came to his ears and in another minute he could distinguish the words of the song. It was a song showing that the singer was one of those favored beings who are satisfied with what the world has given them—as you will see for yourself when you hear it. These are the words as they came to Tom's ears, sung to a soft little air which the Poker made up as he went along, thereby showing that he was a musician as well as a Poker:

"Oh, I am a Poker bold and free,
And I poke the livelong day.
I love the land and I hate the sea,
But the sky and the clouds are there for me.

I dote on the Milky Way.
The clouds are as soft as a fleecy rug,
And as cool as cool can be.
The skies fit into my figure snug,
And they make me feel so blithe and smug
That I am glad Fate made me Me.
Oh Me!
Ah Me!
'Tis a lovely fate
And a mission great
To be
Like me
And to love the skies,
And the clouds to prize,
And to hate the turbulent sea,
He—he—
So I lift my voice
And I loud rejoice
That the Fates have made me Me."

"Hullo!" cried the Righthandiron.

"Halloa!" called the Lefthandiron.

"That's not my name," came the voice of the Poker from behind a cloud just above Tom's head. "But I know who you mean, so I answer Halloa yourself."

"Where are you?" cried Lefty.

"Here," called the Poker.

"No, you're not," called Righty. "You're there. We are here."

"Well, that's neither here nor there," retorted the Poker, poking his head out through the cloud. "Hullo! Who have you got there? That isn't Tom, is it?"

"No—it's Sleepyhead D. Dormouse," laughed Lefty.

"Good," said the Poker, advancing and shaking Tom by the hand. "I was afraid it was Tom. Not that I dislike Tom, for I don't. I think he is one of the nicest boys I know—but he weighs a good fifty-seven pounds, and so far we haven't been able to get a cloud strong enough to support more than fifty-six. If Tom were to come up here and sit on a cloud he'd fall through, and if he fell through, you know what would happen."

"No, I don't," said Tom, to whom the Poker's remarks were addressed. "What would happen?"

"Well, in the first place, it would spoil the cloud, and in the second place, if he tumbled into the sea he'd have to swim ashore," said the Poker, sagely. "That's why I am glad you're young Mr. Dormouse, and not Tom. Dormice can sit on the flimsiest clouds we have and not break through."

"What is a Dormouse anyhow?" asked Tom, to whom it now occurred for the first time that he had never seen a Dormouse.

"Ho!" jeered Righty, as Tom asked the question. "The idea of not knowing what a Dormouse is!"

"He's a mouse with a door to him, of course," said Lefty.

"Which he keeps closed," said the Poker, "so that he will not be disturbed while he is asleep."

Tom tried to imagine what a creature of that sort looked like, but he found it difficult. Not liking to appear stupid he accepted the explanation.

"Oh!" he said. "It must be a very pretty animal."

"Oh, yes!" said the Poker. "But he isn't as pretty as I can be

when I try. My, how pretty I can be—but say, Andies, where are we bound this trip?"

"We've left that to Sleepyhead to decide," said Lefty.

"In the usual way of course?" queried the Poker.

"Oh, yes! He can't decide except as we want him to and have it go as a real decision. We've given him his choice of watching the world go round, going to Saturn or taking the long jump."



"A MOUSE WITH A DOOR TO HIM."

"And which will it be, Dormy?" asked the Poker.

"I sort of think I'd like to sit up here and watch the world go round," said Tom.

"Nope," said Righty.

"Then let's go to Saturn," suggested Tom.

"Oh, no!" said Righty. "Not that."

"Then there's only one thing left," said Tom, with a sigh, "and that's the long jump—whatever that is."

Tom's three companions roared with laughter.

"Absurd!" cried Righty. "The idea. The long jump the only thing left! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perfect nonsense," laughed Lefty. "I never thought Dozy Pate could be so dull."

"Well, he isn't anything like as dull as I can be when I try," said the Poker. "He's pretty dull, though."

"I don't see where the joke comes in," snapped Tom, who did not at all like the way the Andirons and the Poker were behaving. "If there are only three things we can do and vou won't do two of them there's only one left."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lefty.

"Poor dull Dormouse," said Righty, with a smile that was half of mirth and half sympathy.

"You are evidently a Dormouse with very little education, Dormy," said the Poker. "If there are three apples on a plate, one red, one green and one white and you are told to take your pick of the lot there are four things you can do, not three."

"What are they?" asked Tom, meekly.

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"There's no better place than this cloud."

"You can take a red one, a white one, a green one, or all three. See?"

"Oh, yes!" said Tom, beginning to smile again. "I see. You don't want me to choose watching the earth go round, or going to Saturn, or taking the long jump, but you do want me to choose all three."

"Now you are talking sense," said Righty. "And sense is what we are after."

"That's it." said the Poker. "Now what do you choose, Dormy?"

"All three!" roared Tom.

"The Dormouse is getting his eyes open," said Lefty.

"Which is very proper," put in Righty, "for there is a great deal for him to see."

"Not so much as there is for me to see," said the Poker. "My, what a lot there is for me to see!"

"The first thing for us to do," said Lefty, paying no attention to the Poker's words, "is to get a good place for us to sit, so that Sleepyhead can see the world."

"There's no better place than this cloud," said the Poker. "I've sat here many a time and studied China by the hour."

"It's a little too far away for Sleepyhead," said Lefty. "Dormy mustn't be allowed to strain his eyes."

"Never thought of that," said the Poker. "Of course, I can see a great deal farther than he can. My, how far I can see! What's the matter with our pushing the cloud in a little nearer?"

"Nothing—if we can do it," said Righty. "But can we?"

"We can 'wink our eye and try,' as the poet says," returned the Poker. "Ever heard that poem, Dormy?"

"No," returned Tom. "That is, not that I know of. I've heard lots of poetry in my life, but it goes in one ear and out of the other."

"You must have a queer head," said the Poker, peering into Tom's ear. "How a poem poured into one ear can go out of the other I can't understand. There doesn't seem to be any opening there."

"His head isn't solid like ours," said Lefty. "It's too bad to be afflicted the way he is. He ought to do the way a boy I knew once did. He suffered just as Dormy does. You'd tell him a thing in his left ear and the first thing you'd know, pop! it would all come out of the other ear and be lost. The poor fellow was growing up to be an ignoramus. Couldn't keep a thing in his head, until one night I overheard his father and mother talking about it in the library. The boy's father wanted to punish him for not remembering what he learned at school, when his mother said just what Dormy here said, that everything went in one ear and out of the other. Then they both looked sad, and the mother rubbed her eyes until the



"IN ONE EAR AND OUT OF THE OTHER."

tears came. I couldn't stand that. If there's one thing in the world I can't stand it's other people's sorrows. Mine don't amount to much, but other people's do sometimes. I felt so bad for the poor parents that I racked and racked my brains trying to think of some way to cure the boy. It took me a week, but I got it at last and the next time the boy's parents talked about it I took the matter in hand. I simply walked out of the fireplace where I was and said, 'I hope you will excuse the interference of an Andiron, ma'am, but I think your boy can be cured of his ear trouble.' 'Noble fellow,' said the father, after he had got over his surprise at my unusual behavior. 'What do you suggest?'

" 'Put a cork in his other ear,' said I.

"And they did, and from that time on the boy never lost a bit of information any one gave him. He grew up to be a dreadfully wise man and when he finally died he was known as the human N. Cyclopedia."

"That was a noble act of yours," said the Poker. "Did you have the idea patented?"

"No," said the Andiron. "I wanted to, but the patent rules require that a working model should be sent with the request for a patent for the patent office to keep, which of course I couldn't do."

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"I couldn't get a boy who would consent to spend his life in the showcase. I could get all the corks I wanted, but no boy, and so I had to give it up," replied Lefty, with a sigh. "I'd have been a rich Andiron today if I could have had that idea patented. I shouldn't

be surprised if I'd have had enough to have Righty and the Poker and myself goldplated."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't feel bad about that," said the Poker. "What's the use? You're bright as any gold that ever shined and you are quite as useful. Gold may be worth more than you are, but what of it? The people who bought you are willing to change their gold for you, so that really puts you ahead. As for myself I wouldn't be gold if I could. Gold Pokers aren't worth anything as Pokers, and what's more, if I were gold Tom's father would lock me up in the safe every night and then I couldn't travel about the way I do."

"Never thought of it in that light," said Lefty. "I'm glad I'm brass, after all."

"But you were going to tell us a poem, weren't you?" asked Tom.

"Yes," said the Poker. "It's a simple little verse, but there is a good deal of fine advice in it. All it says is:

"If you're in doubt if you can do
A thing some one has asked you to,
Don't sit you down and moan and cry
Because you can't, but wink your eye
And try."

"There's good advice enough for a lifetime in that, Dormy," said the Righthandiron. "And now let's see if we can move the cloud."

The four little creatures set out at once to push the cloud nearer to the earth so that Tom could see the latter going around more clearly, but their efforts were in vain. The cloud wouldn't budge an inch.

"No use," said the Poker, panting with his exertion. "There is only one thing to do now and that is to send for the Bellows. If he'll come and blow in his usual style we'll have that cloud where we want it in less than no time. I'd blow it there myself, for I am a far better blower than the Bellows is—my, how I can blow! But I'm out of breath trying to push the cloud."

"I'll run back and get the Bellows," said Lefty.

"And I'll go with you," said Righty. "He may not come for one, but I'm sure he will for two."

"All right," said the Poker. "Dormy and I will wait here for you; and I'll tell him a story while you're gone. How will that suit you Dormy?"

"First rate," said Tom. "I like stories."

"We'll be back soon," said the Righthandiron, as he and the other started back after the Bellows. "So make your story short."

"Very good," returned the Poker amiably. "I'll make it so short that Dormy will hardly know that it was ever begun."

And so Tom was left sitting on a big cloud way up in the sky with the Poker—which was indeed a very novel position for a small boy like him to be in.

CHAPTER IV.

The Poker Tells His Story

"I suppose," said the Poker, after the Andirons had passed out of hearing distance, "I suppose you think it a very extraordinary thing that I, who am nothing but a Poker, should be satisfied with my lot. Eh?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Tom, snuggling down on the cloud which he found to be deliciously soft and comfortable. "If you were a Poker who could only poke it might seem queer. But you can talk and sing and travel about. You don't have to do any work in summer time, and in winter you have a nice warm spot to stay in all the day long. I don't think it's very strange.

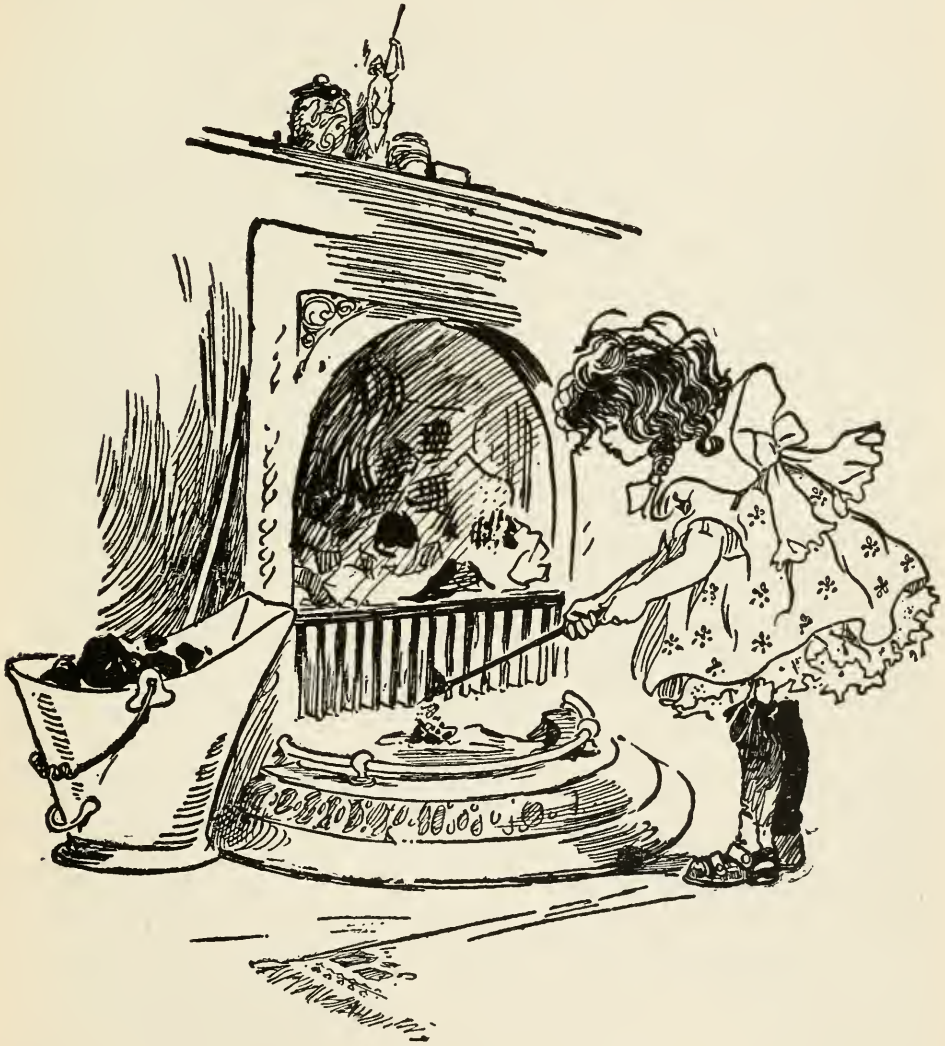
"But I'm not different from any other Poker," said Tom's companion. "They all do pretty much what I do except that most of them are always growling at their hard lot, while I do very little but sing and rejoice that I am what I am, and the story I was going to tell you was how I came to be so well satisfied to be a Poker. Would you like to have me do that, Dormy?"

"Yes," said Tom. "Very much. Were you always a Poker?"

"Not I," said the Poker, with a shake of his head. "I've been a Poker only two years. Before that I had been a little of everything. What do you suppose I began life as?"

"A railroad track," said Tom, bound to have a guess at the right

answer, though he really hadn't the slightest notion that he was correct.



"A POKER WHO COULD ONLY POKE."

"You came pretty near it," said the Poker, with a smile. "I began life as a boy."

"I don't see how a boy is pretty near a railroad track," said Tom.

"The boy I began life as lived right next door to a railroad," explained the Poker. "See now?"

"Yes," said Tom. "But why didn't you stay a boy?"

"Because I wasn't contented," said the Poker, with a sigh. "I ought to have been, though. I had everything in the world that a boy could want. My parents were as good to me as they could possibly be. I had all the toys I wanted. All I could eat—plenty of pudding and other good things as often as they were to be had. I had two little sisters, who used to do everything in the world for me. Plenty of boy friends to play with, and, as I said before, a railroad right next door—and oh, the trains, and trains, and trains I used to see! It was great fun. I can see, now that I look back on it, and yet I never was satisfied. I used to cry my eyes out sometimes because I hadn't wings like a bird, so that I could fly. At other times I'd get discontented that I couldn't run as fast as a dog—I never went to bed without feeling envious of somebody or something.

"Finally one night I'd gone to bed feeling particularly unhappy because a big eagle I had seen flying about in the sky could do things I couldn't. My nurse, thinking I had fallen asleep, went out of the night nursery and left me alone. Just as she went out of one door the other door opened and a very beautiful lady came in.

"'Is that you, mama?' I asked.

"'No,' said she. 'I am not your mother. I am a Fairy.'

"I had been crying pretty hard, I can tell you," said the Poker, with a shake of his head, "but as soon as I heard the lady say she was a Fairy my tears dried up as quick as lightning.

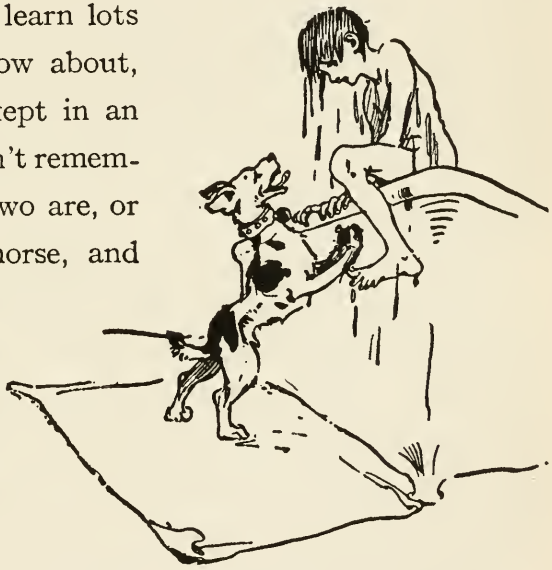


"I am not your mother; I am a fairy."

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"'I am a Fairy,' she repeated, coming to the side of my little bed and stroking my forehead kindly. 'My duty is to seek out one discontented person each year and see if I can't do something to help him. I have come to help you if I can. Don't you like being a boy?'"

"'Not very much,' said I. 'It's awfully hard work. I have to go to school every day and learn lots of things I don't care to know about, and most of the time I'm kept in an hour or two just because I can't remember how much seven times two are, or whether c-a-t spells dog or horse, and I don't like it.'



"DOESN'T HAVE TO LIVE IN A BATHTUB."

"'But you are strong and well. Your father and mother are very good to you and you have more good times than unhappy ones, don't you?'

"'I never counted,' said I. 'I don't believe I do, though. I'm strong and well, but so is that eagle I saw today, and he can fly, and I can't. Then there's my little dog—he's as well as can be, and my father and mother are kind to him just as they are kind to me. He doesn't have to bother with school. He's allowed to go anywhere he wants to, and never gets scolded for it. Besides, he doesn't have to be dressed up all the time and live in a bathtub the way I do.'

"'Then you think you would be happier as Rollo than you are as yourself?' said she.

"'Very much,' said I.

"'Then it shall be so,' said she. 'Good-by!'

"She went out as quietly as she had come, and I turned over and after thinking over what she had said I fell asleep. Then the queerest thing happened. I slept right through until the morning, dreaming the strangest dream you ever heard of. I dreamed that I had been changed into Rollo—and oh, the fun I had! Life was nothing but play and liberty, and then I waked. I tried to call my father and tell him I was ready for the morning story, but what do you suppose I did instead?"

"Give it up," said Tom. "What?"

"I barked," said the Poker, "and when I barked I looked down at my feet. Sure enough I was Rollo, and Rollo was I lying asleep in my bed. I was on the floor at the foot of the bed. Then the nurse came in and slapped me for barking and I had the pleasure of being sent down stairs to the cellar, while Rollo himself, who had been changed into me went into my father's room and got the story."

"Mercy!" said Tom. "I guess you were sorry about that."

"I was, a little," said the Poker. "But after I had been down in the cellar an hour or two I saw a beautiful piece of steak in the ice-box and I ate it all up. It wasn't cooked at all, but being a little dog I liked it all the better for that. Then I drank up a panful of milk and had a lovely time teasing the cat, until the cook came down, when my troubles began. I never knew when I was a boy that Rollo had troubles, but I found out that day that he had. The cook gave me a terrible whipping because I had eaten the steak, and I had hardly recovered from that when Rollo, who was now what I had

been, took me up into the nursery and played with me just as I had always played with him. He held me up by the tail; he flicked me with his handkerchief; he harnessed me up to a small cart and made me drag his sisters' doll babies about the room for one whole hour, and then when lunch time came the waitress forgot me and I had to go hungry all the afternoon. Every time I'd try to go into the kitchen the cook would drive me out with a stick for fear I would eat the other things in the cellar—and oh, dear, I had a miserable time of it.

"The worst of it came two or three days later," continued the Poker. "It was Rollo's bath day, and as I was Rollo of course I had to take Rollo's bath, and my, wasn't it awful! I'd rather take a hundred such baths as I had when I was a boy than one like Rollo's. The soap got into my eyes and I couldn't say a word. Then it got into my mouth, and bah! how fearful it was. After that I was grabbed by all four of my legs and soused into the water until I thought I should drown, and rubbed until my fur nearly came off.

"I wished then that I had asked the Fairy to leave her address so that I could send for her and have her come back and let me be a boy again. All the fun of being Rollo was spoiled by the woes that were his to bear—woes I had never dreamed of his having until I took his place.

"I must have been Rollo a month when the Fairy came back one night to see how I was getting along. Rollo lay asleep in my crib, while I was curled up in a dog basket at the foot of it.

"'Well,' said the Fairy as she entered the room, 'how do you both do?'

"'I like it first-rate,' said Rollo. 'Being a boy is ever so much nicer than being a dog.'

"'I think so, too,'" said I. 'And if you don't mind I'd like to be a boy again.'

"'What boy do you want to be?' she asked.

"'What boy?' said I. 'Why, myself, of course. Who else?'

"'What has Rollo to say about that?' said the Fairy, turning to him—and I tell you, Dormy, it made my heart sick to hear that Rollo had anything to say about it, for there couldn't be much doubt as to how he would decide."

CHAPTER V.

The Poker Concludes His Story

"IT was just as I feared," said the Poker. "Rollo knew a good thing when he had it."

"'I'm satisfied the way things are now,' said he. 'I wouldn't change back and be a Scotch terrier for all the world.'

"Then the Fairy turned to me and said, 'I'm sorry, my dear, but if Rollo won't consent to the change you'll have to be contented to remain as you are—unless you'd like to try being an eagle for a while.'

"'I'll never consent,' said Rollo, selfishly, though I couldn't really blame him for it.

"'Then make me an eagle,' I said. 'Make me anything but what I am.'

"'Very well,' said the Fairy. 'Good-night.'

"Next morning," continued the Poker, "when I waked up I was cold and stiff, and when I opened my eyes to look about me I found myself seated on a great ledge of rock on the side of a mountain. Far below me were tops of the trees in a forest I never remembered to have seen before, while above me a hard black wall of rock rose straight up for a thousand feet. To climb upward was impossible; to climb down, equally so.

"'What on earth does this mean?' thought I; and then, in

attempting to walk, I found that I had but two legs, where the night before I had fallen asleep with four.

"'Am I a boy again?' I cried with delight.

"'No,' said a voice from way below me in the trees. 'You are now an eagle and I hope you will be happy.'

"You never were an eagle, were you, Dormy?" said the Poker, gazing earnestly into Tom's face.

"No," said Tom, "never. I've never been any kind of bird."

"Well, don't you ever be one," said the Poker, with a knowing shake of the head. "It's all very beautiful to think about, but being an eagle is entirely different from what thinking about it is. I was that eagle for one whole month, and the life of a Scotch terrier is bliss alongside of it. In the first place it was fight, fight, fight for food. It was lots of fun at first jumping off the crag down a thousand feet into the valley, but flying back there to get out of the way of the huntsmen was worse than pulling a sled with rusty runners up a hill a mile long. Then, when storms came up I had to sit up there on that mountain side and take 'em all as they



"EAGLES NEVER HAVE UMBRELLAS."

came. I hadn't any umbrella—eagles never have—to keep off the rain; and no walls except on one side, to keep off the wind, and no shutters to close up so that I couldn't see the lightning. It was terrible. All I got to eat in the whole month was a small goat and a chicken hawk, and those I had to swallow wool, feathers and all. Then I got into fights with other eagles, and finally while I was looking for lunch in the forest I fell into a trap and was caught by some men who put me in a cage so that people could come to see me."

"Ever been shut up in a cage?" queried the Poker at this point.

"No," said Tom, "only in a dark closet."

"Never had to stay shut up, though, more than ten minutes, did you?"

"No," answered Tom, "never."

"Well, think of me cooped up in an old cage for two weeks!" said the Poker. "That was woe enough for a lifetime, but it wasn't half what I had altogether. The other creatures in the Zoo growled and shrieked all night long; none of us ever got a quarter enough to eat, and several times the monkey in the cage next to me would reach his long arm into my prison and yank out half a dozen of my feathers at once. In fact, I had nothing but mishaps all the time. As the poet says:

"Talk about your troubles,
Talk about your woes,
Yours are only bubbles,
Sir, compared with those.

"At the end of two weeks I was nearly frantic. I don't think I could have stood it another week—but fortunately at the end of the month back came the Fairy again.

"'How do you like being an eagle?' she said.

"'I'd rather be a tree rooted to the ground in the midst of a dense forest than all the eagles in the world,' said I.

"'Very well,' said she. 'It shall be so. Good-night.'

"In the morning I was a tree—and if there is anything worse than being a dog or an eagle it's being a tree," said the Poker. "I could hear processions going by with fine bands of music in the distance, but I couldn't stir a step to see them. Boys would come along and climb up into my branches and shake me nearly to pieces. Cows came and chewed up my leaves, and one day the wood-cutters came and were just about to cut me down when the Fairy appeared again and sent them away.

"'They will be back again tomorrow,' she said. 'Do you wish to remain a tree?'

"'No, no, no,' I cried. 'I'll be content to be anything you choose if you will save me from them.'

"'There,' she said. 'That's the point. If you will keep that promise you will finally be happy. If you will only look on the bright side of things, remembering the pleasant and forgetting the unpleasant, you will be happy. If you will be satisfied with what you are and have and not go about swelling up with envy whenever you see anyone or anything that has or can do things that you have not or cannot do, you will be happy in spite of yourself. Will you promise me this?'

"'Indeed I will,' I said.

"'Even if I change you into so poor a thing as a Poker?

"'Yes,' said I.



"ONE DAY THE WOODCUTTERS CAME." (49)

"'Very well,' said she. 'It shall be so. Good-night.'

"Next morning I waked up to find myself as you see—nothing more than a Poker, but contented to be one. I have kept my promise with the Fairy, and I am simply the happiest thing in the world. I don't sit down and groan because I have to poke the fire. On the contrary, when I am doing that I'm always thinking how nice it will be when I get done and I lean up against the rack and gaze on all the beautiful things in the room. I always think about the pleasant things, and if you don't know it, Dormy, let me tell you that that's the way to be happy and to make others happy. Sometimes people think me vain. The Fender told me one night I was the vainest creature he ever knew. I'm not really so. I only will not admit that there is anything or anybody in the world who is more favored than I am. That is all. If I didn't do that I might sometime grow a little envious in spite of myself. As it is I never do and haven't had an unhappy hour since I became a contented Poker."

Tom was silent for a few minutes after the Poker had completed his story, and then he said:

"Don't you sometimes feel unhappy because you are not the boy you used to be?"

"No," said the Poker. "I am not because Rollo makes a better boy than I was. He is a contented boy and I was not."

"But don't you miss your father and mother?" queried Tom.

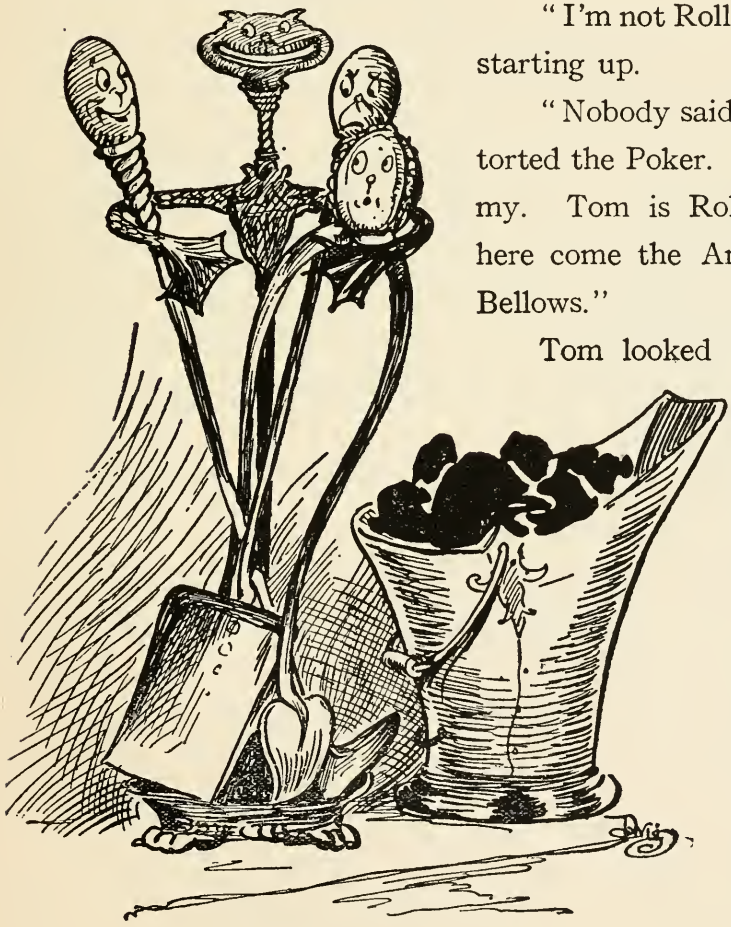
"Of course not," said the Poker, "because the Fairy was good enough to have me made into the Poker used in their new house. My parents moved away from the railroad just after Rollo became me,

and built themselves a new house, and of course they had to have a new Poker to go with it—so I really live home, you see, with them."

A curious light came into Tom's eyes.

"Mr. Poker," said he. "Who was this boy you used to be?"

"Tom," said the Poker



"SO I REALLY LIVE HOME."

"I'm not Rollo," roared Tom, starting up.

"Nobody said you were," retorted the Poker. "You are Dormy. Tom is Rollo—but, I say, here come the Andirons and the Bellows."

Tom looked down from the cloud, and sure enough the three were coming up as fast as the wind, and in the excitement of the moment the little traveler forgot all about the Poker's story, in which he seemed himself to have figured without knowing it.

CHAPTER VI.

The Literary Bellows

"WHAT kept you so long?" asked the Poker, as the Andiron and Bellows came up. "Was our friend Bellows out of breath, or what?"

"No, I wasn't out of breath," said the Bellows. "I never am out of breath. You might as well expect a groceryman to be out of groceries as a bellows to be out of breath. I wasn't long, either—at least, no longer than usual, which is two foot three. A longer bellows than that would be useless for our purpose. I simply didn't want to come, that's all. I was very busy writing when they interrupted me."

"It was very kind of you to come when you didn't want to," said Tom.

"No, it wasn't," said the Bellows. "I didn't want to come then, I don't want to be here now, and I wouldn't blow the cloud an inch for you if I didn't have to."

"But why do you have to?" asked Tom.

"I'm outvoted, that's all," replied the Bellows. "You see, my dear Weasel"—

"Dormouse," whispered the Poker.

"I mean Dormouse," said the Bellows, correcting himself. "You see, I believe in everybody having a say in regard to everything. I always have everything I can put to a vote. Consequently,

when Righty here came down and asked me to help blow the cloud over and I said that I wouldn't do it he called Lefty in, and we put it to a vote as to whether I'd have to or not. They voted that I must and I voted that I needn't, and, of course, that beat me; so here I am."

"Well, it's very good of you, just the same," said the Poker. "You aren't quite as good-natured as I am, but you come pretty near it. Most people would have left a matter of that kind entirely to themselves and then voted the way they felt like voting. You aren't selfish, anyhow."



"WHAT'S THE USE OF FIGHTING?"

"Yes, I am," said the Bellows. "I'm awfully selfish."

"You're not, either," said the Poker.

"Oh, goodness!" ejaculated the Bellows. "What's the use of fighting? I say I am."

"Let's have a vote on it," said Righty. "I vote he isn't."

"So do I," said Tom.

"Me, too," said Lefty.

"Those are my sentiments likewise," put in the Poker.

"Oh, very well, then, I'm not," said the Bellows, with a deep drawn sigh; "but I do wish you'd let me have my own way about some things. I want to be selfish, even if I'm not."

"Well, we are very sorry," said the Poker, "but we can't let

you be; we need you too much to permit you to be selfish. Besides, you're too good a fellow to be selfish. I knew a boy who was selfish once, and he got into all sorts of trouble. Nobody liked him, and once when he gave a big dinner to a lot of other boys not one of them would come, and he had to eat all the dinner himself. The result was that he overate himself, ruined his digestion, and all the rest of his life had to do without pies and cake and other good things. It served him right, too. Do you think we are going to let you be like that, Mr. Bellows?"

"I suppose not," said the Bellows, "but stories about selfish boys don't frighten me. I'm a bellows, not a boy. I don't give dinners and I don't eat pie and cake. Plain air is good enough for me, and I wouldn't give a cent for all the other good eatables in the world except doughnuts. I like doughnuts because, after all, they are only bellows cakes. But come, let's hurry up with the cloud. I want to get back to my desk. I have a poem to finish before breakfast."

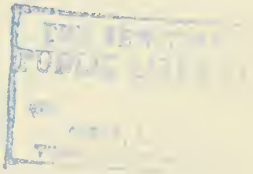
This statement interested Tom hugely. He had read many a book, but never before had he met a real author, and even if the Bellows had been a man, so long as he was a writer, Tom would have looked upon him with awe.

"Excuse me," he said hesitatingly, as the Bellows began to wheeze away at the cloud, "do you really write?"

"Well, no," said the Bellows. "No, I don't write, but I blow a story or two now and then. You see, I can't write because I haven't any hands, but I can wheeze out a tale to a stenographer once in a while which any magazine would be glad to publish if it could get hold of it. One of my stories called Sparks blew into a



"I blow a story or two, now and then."



powder magazine once and it made a tremendous noise in the world when it came out."

"I wish you would tell me one," said Tom.

"Are you a stenographer?" asked the Bellows.

"No," said Tom, "but I like stories just the same."

"Well," said the Bellows, "I'll tell you one about Jimmie Tompkins and the red apple."

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "I love red apples."

"So did Jimmie Tompkins," said the Bellows, "and that's why he died. He ate a red apple while it was green and it killed him."

There was a pause for an instant, and the Bellows redoubled his efforts to move the cloud, which for some reason or other did not stir easily.

"Go ahead," said Tom, when he thought he had waited long enough for the Bellows to resume.

"What on?" asked the Bellows.

"On your story about Jimmie Tompkins and the red apple," Tom answered.

"Why, I've told you that story," retorted the Bellows. "Jimmie ate the red apple and died. What more do you want? That's all there is to it."

"It isn't a very long story," suggested Tom, ruefully, for he was much disappointed.

"Well, why should it be?" demanded the Bellows. "A story doesn't have to be long to be good, and as long as it is all there—"

"I know," said Tom; "but in most stories there's a lot of things put in that help to make it interesting."

"All padding!" sneered the Bellows, "and that I will never do. If a story can be told in five words what's the use of padding it out to five thousand?"

"None," said Tom, "except that you can't make a book out of a story of five words."

"Oh, yes, you can," said the Bellows, airily. "It isn't any trouble at all if you only know how, and in the end you have a much more useful book than if you made it a million words long. You can print the five words on the first page and leave the other five hundred pages blank, so that after you get through with the volume as a story book you can use it for a blank book or a diary. Most books nowadays are so full of story that when you get through with them there isn't anything else you can do with the book."

"It's a new idea," said Tom, with a laugh.

"And all my own invention, too," said the Bellows proudly.

"He's the most inventive Bellows that ever was," put in the Poker, "that is, in a literary way. How many copies of your book of 'Unwritten Poems' did you sell, Wheezy?" he added.

"Eight million," returned the Bellows. "That was probably my greatest literary achievement."

"'Unwritten Poems,' eh?" said Tom, to whom the title seemed curious.

"Yes," said the Bellows. "The book had three hundred pages, all nicely bound—twenty-six lines to a page—and each beginning with a capital letter, just as poetry should. Then, so as to be quite fair to all the letters, I began with A and went right straight through the alphabet to Z."

"But the poems?" demanded Tom.

"They were unwritten just as the title said," returned the Bellows. "You see that left everything to the imagination, which is a great thing in poetry."

"Didn't people complain?" Tom asked.

"Everybody did," replied the Bellows, "but that was just what I wanted. I agreed to answer every complaint accompanied by ten cents in postage stamps. Eight million complaints alone brought me in $480,000 over and above all expenses, which were four cents per complaint."

"But what was your answer?" demanded Tom.

"I merely told them that my book stood upon its own merits, and that if they didn't like my unwritten poems they could write some of their own on the blank pages of the book. It was a perfectly fair proposition," the Bellows replied.

"I think I like written poetry best, though," said Tom.

"That's entirely a matter of taste," said the Bellows, "and I shan't find fault with you for that. The only thing is that Unwritten Poems are apt to have fewer faults than the written ones, and every great poet will tell you that nobody ever detected any mistakes in his poems until he had put them down on paper. If he had left them unwritten nobody would ever have known how bad they were."

Tom scratched his head in a puzzled mood. He could not quite grasp the Bellows' meaning.

"What do you think about it, Righty?" he demanded of the Andiron.

"Oh, I don't think anything about it," replied Righty. "I

haven't watched poetry much. You see, Lefty and I don't see much of it. People light fires nowadays more with newspapers than with poetry."

"What I've seen burns well," observed the Lefthandiron, "and don't make much ashes to get into your eyes; but, say, Wheezy, if you'll do your blowing about this cloud rather than about your poetry we may get somewhere."

"Very well," said the Bellows; "fasten your hats on tight and turn up your collars. I'm going to give you a regular tornado."



"HE GAVE A TREMENDOUS WHEEZE."

And he was as good as his word, for, expanding himself to the utmost limit, he gave a tremendous wheeze, which nearly blew Tom from his perch, sent his cap flying off into space and smashed the cloud into four separate pieces, one of which, bearing the Poker, floated rapidly off to the north, while the other three sped south, east and west, respectively.

"Hi, there," cried Righty, as he perceived the damage done to their fleecy chariot. "What are you up to? We don't want to be blown to the four corners of the earth. Pull in—pull in, for goodness sake, or we'll never get together again!"

"There's no satisfying you fellows," growled the Bellows. "First I don't blow enough, and then I blow too much."

"Stop growling and haul us back again!" cried the Poker.

The Bellows began to haul in his breath rapidly, and by a process of suction soon had the four parts of the burst cloud back together once more.

"By jingo!" panted Lefty. "That was a narrow escape. Two seconds more and this party would have been a goner. Even as it is, you've twisted my neck so I'll never get it back in shape again," said the Righthandiron.

"Well, I'm sorry," said the Bellows, "but it's all your own fault. You asked me to blow the cloud, and I blew it. You didn't say where you wanted it blown."

"You needn't have blown it to smithereens, just the same!" retorted the Poker. "It doesn't cost anything to ask a question now and then."

"Where, then?" demanded the Bellows.

"I'd like to find my hat," said Tom.

"Very well," said the Bellows. "I see it speeding off toward the moon, and we'll chase after it, but we'll never catch it if it misses the moon and falls past it into space."

The Poker rose to his full height and peered after the cap, which, even as the Bellows had said, was sailing rapidly off in the direction of the crescent moon, which lay to the west and below them.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "It's all right."

"Can you see it still?" asked Tom, anxiously, for his cap was made of sealskin and he didn't wish to lose it.

"Yes, it's all right," said the Poker. "It nearly missed, but not quite. If you will look through these glasses you will see it."

The Poker handed Tom a pair of strong field glasses and the lad, gazing anxiously through them, was delighted to see his wandering cap hanging, as if on a great golden hook in the sky beneath them, and which was nothing more than the last appearance of the moon itself.

"Good!" cried the Righthandiron. "That settles the question for us of where we shall go next. There is no choice left. We'll go to the moon. Heave ahead, Wheezy."

Whereupon the Bellows began to blow, at first gently, then stronger and stronger, and yet more strongly still, until the cloud was moving rapidly in the direction they desired.

CHAPTER VII.

They Reach the Crescent Moon

AS the jolly party sped along through the heavens Tom began to find his eyes bothering him a trifle. Brilliant as many of the sunshiny days had been at home, particularly when the snow was on the ground, nothing so dazzlingly bright as this great golden arc in the sky was getting to be, as they approached closer, had ever greeted his sight.

"It's blinding!" he cried, his eyes blinking and filling with water as he gazed upon the scene. "I can't stand it. What shall I do, Lefty?"

"Turn your head around and approach it backward," said Lefty. "Then you won't see it."

"But I want to see it," retorted Tom. "What's the use of visiting the moon if you can't see it?"

"Reminds me of a poem I wrote once," put in the Poker. "'What's the Use?' was one of my masterpieces, and maybe if I recite it to you it will help your eyes."

"Bosh!" growled the Bellows, who was beginning to get a little short-winded with his labors, and, therefore, a trifle out of temper. "How on earth will reciting your poem help Tom's eyes?"

"Easy enough," returned the Poker haughtily and with a contemptuous glance at the Bellows. "My poem is so much brighter than the moon that the moon will seem dull alongside of it."

"Go ahead anyhow," said Tom, interested at once and forgetting his eyes for the moment. "Give us the poem."

"Here goes, then," said the Poker, with a low bow and then, standing erect, he began. "It's called

WHAT'S THE USE.

What's the use of circuses that haven't any beasts?
What's the use of restaurants that haven't any feasts?

What's the use of oranges that haven't any peels?
What's the use of bicycles that haven't any wheels?

What's the use of railway trains that have no place to go?
What's the use of going to war if you haven't any foe?

What's the use of splendid views for those that cannot see?
What's the use of freedom's flag to folks that aren't free?

What's the use of legs to those who have no wish to walk?
What's the use of languages to those who cannot talk?

What's the use of kings and queens that haven't any throne?
What's the use of having pains unless you're going to groan?

What's the use of anything, however grand and good,
That doesn't ever, ever work the way it really should?"

"Humph!" panted the Bellows, "you don't call that bright, do you?"

"I do, indeed," said the Poker. "And I call it bright because I know it's bright. It is so bright that not a magazine in all the world dare print it, because they'd never be able to do as well again, and people would say the magazine wasn't as good as it used to be."

"What nonsense," retorted the Bellows. "Why, I could blow a mile of poetry like that in ten minutes:

What's the use of churches big that haven't any steeples?
What's the use of nations great that haven't any peoples?

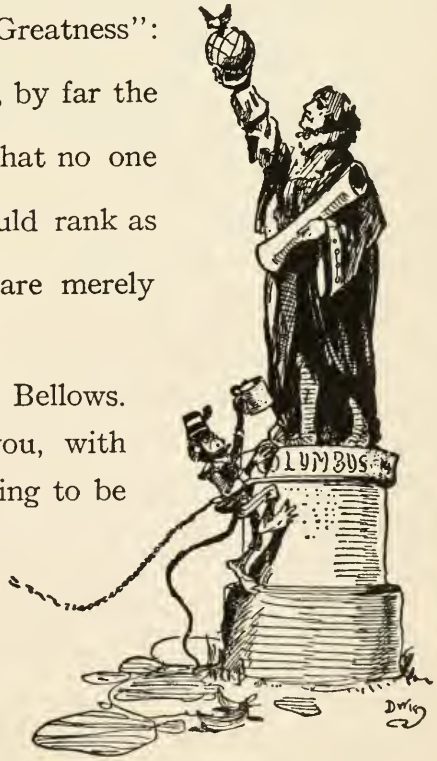
What's the use of oceans grand that haven't any beaches?
What's the use of Delawares that haven't any peaches?

What's the use—"

"O, shut up Wheezy," interrupted the Poker angrily. "Of course you can go on like that forever, once somebody gives you the idea, but to have the idea in the beginning was the big thing. Columbus was a great man for coming to America, but every foreigner who has come over since isn't, not by a long shot. As I say in my celebrated rhyme on "Greatness":

The greatest man in all the world, by far the greatest one,
Is he who goes ahead and does what no one else has done.
But he must be the first if he would rank as some "potaters,"
For those who follow after him are merely imitators.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Bellows. "You are a great chap, Pokey—you, with your poetry. I hope Tom isn't going to be affected by the lessons you teach. The idea of saying that a man is the greatest man in the world because he does what no one else has done! I guess nobody's never eaten bricks up to now. Do you



"COLUMBUS WAS A GREAT MAN."

69

mean to say that if Tom here ate a brick he'd be the greatest man in the world?"

"No; he'd be a cannibal," put in the Righthandiron, desirous of stopping the quarrel between the rivals.

"How do you make that out?" demanded the Bellows.

"Because Tom is a brick himself," explained the Righthandiron; and just then slap! bang! the party plunged head first into what appeared to be—and in fact really was —a huge snowbank.

"Hurrah! Here we are!" cried Lefty, gleefully.

"Wh-where are we?" Tom sputtered, blowing the snow out of his mouth and shaking it from his coat and hair and ears.

"Hi, there! Look out!" roared Righty, grabbing Tom by the coat sleeve and yanking him off to one side. A terrible swishing sound fell upon the lad's ears, and as he gazed doggedly about him to see what had caused it he saw a great golden toboggan whizzing down into the valley, and then slipping up the hill on the other side.

"You had a narrow escape that time," said Righty, as they excitedly watched the toboggan speeding on its way, and which, by the way, was filled with a lot of little youngsters no bigger than Tom himself, children of all colors, apparently, red, white and blue, green, yellow and black. "If I hadn't yanked you away you'd have been run over."

"But where are we?" Tom asked, bewildered by the experience.

"We're on the Crescent Moon at last," said Lefty. "It's the boss toboggan slide of the universe."

"A toboggan slide?" cried Tom.

"The very same," said the Poker. "Didn't you know that this

dazzling whiteness of the Crescent Moon is merely the reflection of the sun's light on the purest of pure white snow? It's too high up for dust and dirt here, you see, and so the snow is always clean, and so, equally of course, is dazzling white."

"But the tobogganing?" asked Tom.

"It's like swinging and letting the old cat die," explained the Righthandiron. "You see, it's this shape, and he marked the crescent form of the moon on the snow and lettered the various points.

"Now," he continued, "you start your toboggan at A and whizz down to C. When you get there you have gathered speed enough to take you up the hill to B. Then of its own weight the toboggan slides back to D, from which it again moves forward to E, and so it keeps on sliding back and forth until finally it comes to a dead stop at C. Isn't that a fine arrangement?"

"Magnificent," said Tom. "And do they call it tobogganing here?"

"No," said Righty, "it's called oscillating, and the machine is known as the oscycle"—

"Don't confound it with the icicle," put in the Bellows.

"Oh, I know what an icicle is," said Tom. "It's a spear of ice that hangs from a piazza roof."

"That's what it is at home," said the Poker, "but not here, my lad. Here an icicle is a bicycle with runners instead of wheels."

"But what makes it go?" demanded Tom.

"Pedals, of course," returned the Poker. "You just tread away on the pedals, as if you were riding on a bicycle, and the chain sets a dozen ice picks revolving that shove you over the ice like the wind. Oh, it's great sport!"



(66) "YOU SEE, IT'S THIS SHAPE.

Another rush and roar of a passing toboggan caused them to pause in their conversation for a moment, and then Tom turned his attention to the diagram Righty had drawn on the snow.

"Suppose you didn't stop at B and go back—what would happen?" he asked as he considered the possible dangers of this wonderful new sport.

"You'd fall over the edge, of course," said the Poker.

"I see that," said Tom. "But if you fell over the edge what would become of you? Where would you land?"

"If you had luck you wouldn't land anywhere," said Righty. "The chances are, however, you'd fall back on the earth again. Maybe in Canada, possibly in China, perhaps in Egypt. It would all depend on the time of night."

"And wouldn't you be killed?" Tom asked.

"Not if you had your rubbers on," said Righty. "If you had your rubbers on it would only jar you slightly. You'd just hit the earth and then bounce back again, but there's no use of talking about that, because it never happened but once. It happened to a chap named Blenkinson, who took an Oscillator that hadn't any brake on it. He was one of those smart fellows that want to show how clever they are. He whizzed down one side and up the other, and pouf! First thing he knew he was flying off into space."

"And what became of him?" demanded Tom.

"He had the luck not to hit anything, but he suffered just the same," said Righty. "He flew on until he got to a point where he was held fast up in the air by the force of gravity of 1,600 different planets, and he's there yet. At a distance he looks like another new

star, but when you get close to him he's nothing more than just a plain, everyday Smarty."

"I should think he'd starve to death," said Tom, as he reflected on the horrid fate of Blenkinson.

"He would if he had any appetite," said the Bellows. "But he hasn't. He's so worried all the time that he can't eat, so he gets along very well without food."

"Let's quit talking now," suggested the Poker, "and get a ride, eh?"

"I'm ready," said Tom eagerly. "Where do we start?"

"There's the station up on the hill. It's only about 700 miles. We can walk it in a year," said Righty.

"I move we take this cloud that's coming up," said the Bellows. "I'm winded."

Tom looked in the direction in which the Bellows had pointed, and, sure enough, there was a cloud coming slowly along, shaped very much like a trolley car, and on the front of it, as it drew nearer, the lad was soon able to discern the funny little figure of a Brownie acting as motorman.

"Why, it's really a trolley!" he cried.

"Certainly it is!" laughed Righty. "Didn't you know that? When you have watched the moon from your window at home and seen constant lines of clouds passing up to it and stopping before its face night after night what did you suppose they did it for? Fun? I guess not. They're clever people up here, these moonfolk are, and they make use of everything going. They've taken these electric clouds and turned 'em into a sort of Sky Traction Company, and



"Why, it's really a trolley!"

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instead of letting 'em travel all around the universe doing nothing and raising thunder generally, some of the richer Brownies have formed a company to control them."

By this time the cloud had reached the point where our little party stood, and the motorman, in response to the Bellows' signal, brought it to a standstill.

"Step lively, please," the conductor cried from the rear end.

Tom and the two Andirons and the Poker and Bellows clambered aboard.

The conductor clanged a bell. The motorman turned his wheel and the cloud moved rapidly on.

And what a queer crowd of folks there were on board that strange trolley cloud. Tom had never seen such an interesting group before.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Trolley Cloud.

AS I stated at the end of the last chapter, the travelers Tom and his companions encountered upon the Trolley cloud were a wonderful lot. In the first place, the whole situation was strange. Here was, in fact, a perfect car, made of what at a distance looked to be nothing but a fleecy bit of vapor. It had seats and signs—indeed, the advertising signs alone were enough to occupy the mind of any person seeing them for the first time to the exclusion of all else, what with the big painted placard at the end, saying:

FOR POLAR BEARS GO TO ARCTICS
FIFTY-SEVEN VARIETIES.
No Home Complete Without Them.

Another showing a picture of Potted Town, in which all the inhabitants lived on canned food and things that came in jars, reading:

This is the famous Potted Town,
Where everything is done up brown,
We live on lobsters tinned, and beans,
And freshly caught and oiled sardines;
On ham and eggs done up in jars,
And caramels that come in bars,
Come buy a lot in Potted Town,
And join the throngs we do up brown.
A corner lot for fifty cents—

A bargain that is just immense.
An inner lot for forty-nine
For residence is just divine.
If in a year you do not find
That we are suited to your mind
We'll give you fifteen cents in gold,
And take back all the lots we've sold,
If, when in other lands you go
You'll recommend Soapolio.

"Who on earth wants a Polar Bear at home?" ejaculated Tom as he read the first.

"I do," growled a deep bass voice at his side, and the little traveler, turning to see who it was that had spoken, was surprised and really startled to find himself seated next to a shaggy-coated beast of that precise kind. "I do," repeated the Polar Bear, "and if anybody says I don't I'll chew him up," and then he opened his mouth and glared at Tom as if to warn the young man from pursuing the subject further.

"So would I," put in Righty. "So would I if all the Polar Bears were like you."

The bear was apparently pleased by the compliment and, with a satisfied wink at Righty, folded his fore legs over his chest and went to sleep.

"I think I'll buy one of those lots in Potted Town," said a Kangaroo who sat opposite to Tom.

"You couldn't raise the money," growled a Flamingo who sat at the far end of the car. "Thirty cents is your measure."

"Let him alone, Flammy," said an Ostrich who was crowded uncomfortably in between the Kangaroo and an old gentleman

with one eye and a green beard who, Tom learned later, was a leading citizen of Saturn. "He can't help it if he's poor."

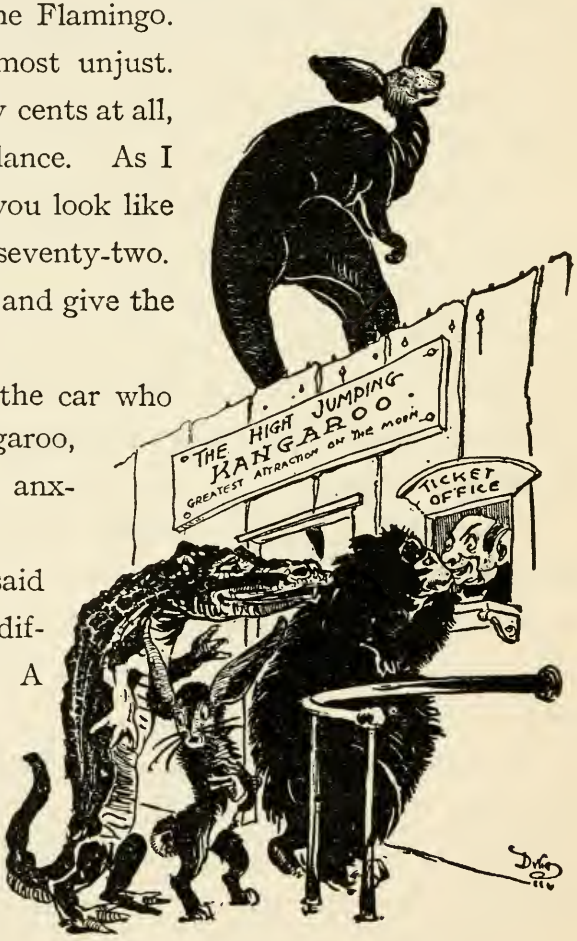
"Thank you, Mr. Ostrich," said the Kangaroo, with a sob. "I was very much hurt by the Flamingo's remark. I have 19,627 children, and it keeps me jumping all the time to support them."

"I apologize," said the Flamingo. "My observations were most unjust. You do not look like thirty cents at all, as I perceive at second glance. As I look at you more closely you look like a $1.39 marked down to seventy-two. But why don't you get up and give the lady your seat?"

"Is there a lady on the car who wants it?" asked the Kangaroo, standing up, and peering anxiously about him.

"No, of course not," said the Flamingo, "but what difference does that make? A true gentleman is polite whether there are ladies present or not."

The Polar Bear opened his eyes and leaning forward glared at the Flamingo.



"IT KEEPS ME JUMPING ALL THE TIME."

"You don't seem to be over-anxious about yourself," he growled. "Why don't you give up your seat to the imaginary lady?"

"Because, Mr. Bear," the Flamingo returned, "it would not be polite. The seat I occupy is extremely uncomfortable, thanks to the crowding of the Hippopotamus on my left and the indulgence in peanuts of the Monkey on my right. By sitting down where I am, I am making a personal sacrifice."

"There'll be a free fight in a minute," said the Poker, anxiously. "I think we'd better get out."

"You won't do anything of the sort," said the Conductor. "Nobody leaves this car until we get there."

"Get where?" demanded the Poker.

"Anywhere," returned the Conductor. "Fares, please."

"But we've all paid," said the Flamingo.

"Somebody hasn't," replied the Conductor. "There are twenty-two on this car and I've collected only twenty-one fares. I don't know who is the deadhead. Therefore you must all pay. It is better that there should be twenty-one lawsuits for a total damage of $1.25 than that this company should lose a nickel. Juries disagree. Fares, please."

"I decline to pay a second time," cried the Monkey.

"And I—and I," came from all parts of the car; from Lefty and Righty, from Tom, the Flamingo, the Hippopotamus and Polar Bear.

"Very well," said the Conductor, calmly. "I don't care. It isn't my money that's lost, but I'll tell you one thing, this car doesn't stop until you've all paid up!"

"What!" cried the Polar Bear. "I want to get off at the Toboggan slide."

"So do I—so do I," cried everybody.

"No doubt," said the Conductor; "but that's your business, not mine. Double your speed, Moty," he added, calling forward to the Motorman. "These people want to get off. Of course, gentlemen and fellow beasts," he continued, "I can't keep you from getting off, but this car is traveling at the rate of four miles a minute, and if you try it, you do so at your own risk. Fares, please."

"It's an outrage!" said the Flamingo.

"I'm going to jump," said the Kangaroo.

"I think we'd better sit still, Tom," whispered Righty. "It would be smithereens if we tried to get off the car going at this rate."

"Don't mind me," said Tom. "I'm having a bully time. This is quite as good fun as oscillating, I guess."

"Excuse me, sir," said the Conductor, in reply to the Kangaroo, "but I must ask your name and address. I cannot prevent you from jumping, but I'm required by the rules of the company to find out all about you before letting you commit suicide. We need the information in case your heirs sue the company. Married?"

"Yes," said the Kangaroo. "Sixteen times."

"Any children?" queried the Conductor.

"I have already said so," sobbed the Kangaroo; "19,627 of them."

"Boys or girls?" asked the Conductor kindly.

"Neither," replied the Kangaroo.

"What?" cried the Conductor.

"Kangaroos, every one of 'em," sobbed the unhappy passenger.

"O, I see," said the Conductor. "What is your business?"

"Jumping," replied the Kangaroo.

"Business address?" demanded the Conductor.

"Number 28 Australia," was the reply.

"Home address?" questioned the Conductor.

"Number 37 Melbourne," said the Kangaroo. "Melbourne is in Australia, you know," he added.

"Made your will?" put in the Conductor, suddenly.

"What has that got to do with it?" cried the Kangaroo, angrily, but with a nervous start.

"We cannot permit you to jump unless you've made a will," said the Conductor, politely. "You see, when you jump you leave the car, and we don't know whom you leave the car to until we have read your will. You might leave it to Tom or to Righty, or to the poetic Poker—or to old Shaggy over there,"—pointing to the Polar Bear. "Inasmuch as it's our car we have a right to know to whom you leave it."

"I guess I'll stay where I am," said the Kangaroo meekly, very much overcome by the Conductor's logic.

"That's the answer," returned the Conductor. "You seem to be a very sensible sort of Kangaroo. Fare, please!" And the Kangaroo, diving down into his pocket, produced a five-cent piece, which he handed over to the Conductor without further comment.

"Anybody else think of jumping off?" asked the Conductor pleasantly, turning about and glancing over the other occupants of the car.

"I might," said the Monkey, placidly.

"O, indeed," said the Conductor, walking along the car to where the Monkey sat. "You might think of jumping off, eh?"

"Yes," said the Monkey.

"Do you know where you would land?"

"Yes," said the Monkey.

"Where?" demanded the Conductor.

"On my feet," said the Monkey. "Where else?"

The Conductor was apparently much put out.

"You're pretty smart, aren't you?" he said.

"No," said the Monkey. "I'm only plain smart. I'm not pretty."

"Everybody's talking about you? I presume," sneered the Conductor.

"Not yet, but they will be," returned the Monkey, with a grin.

"When?" demanded the Conductor.

"When my tail is published," retorted the Monkey, with a grin.

"Humph!" jeered the Conductor. "Great tail that."

"No," said the Monkey, "not very great, but it has a swing about it—"

"Say," interrupted the Hippopotamus, "I've got an idea. Somebody hasn't paid his fare, eh?"

"That's the point," said the Conductor.

"And unless he owns up we've all got to go on in this car forever?"

"You have," replied the Conductor, firmly.

"Well, let's be sensible about it," said the Hippopotamus. "We're all honest—at least I am—and I've paid once, and I admit I'm riding cheap considering my weight. But who hasn't paid? Tom, did you pay?"

"I paid for our whole party," put in Righty.

"Good," said the Hippopotamus. "Did you pay, Monk?"

"Yes, I did," said the Monkey. "I paid for me and Polar Bear."

"Good," said the Hippopotamus. "Has the Flamingo paid?"

"I gave him a promissory note for my fare," said the Flamingo.

"Good," said the Hippopotamus. "And now for the main question. Conductor, have you paid your fare?"

"I?" cried the Conductor.

"Yes, you!" roared the Hippopotamus, "Have you paid your fare?"

"But—" the Conductor began.

"I won't but," returned the Hippo. "I'm a Hippopotamus, I am. Not a goat. Have you paid your fare?"

"Of course I haven't," returned the Conductor, "because—"

"That's it!" returned the Hippopotamus. "That's the whole point. He's the one that's shy, and because we won't consent to pay his fare out of our own pockets he's going to hold us up. I move we squash him."

"But I say," roared the Conductor.

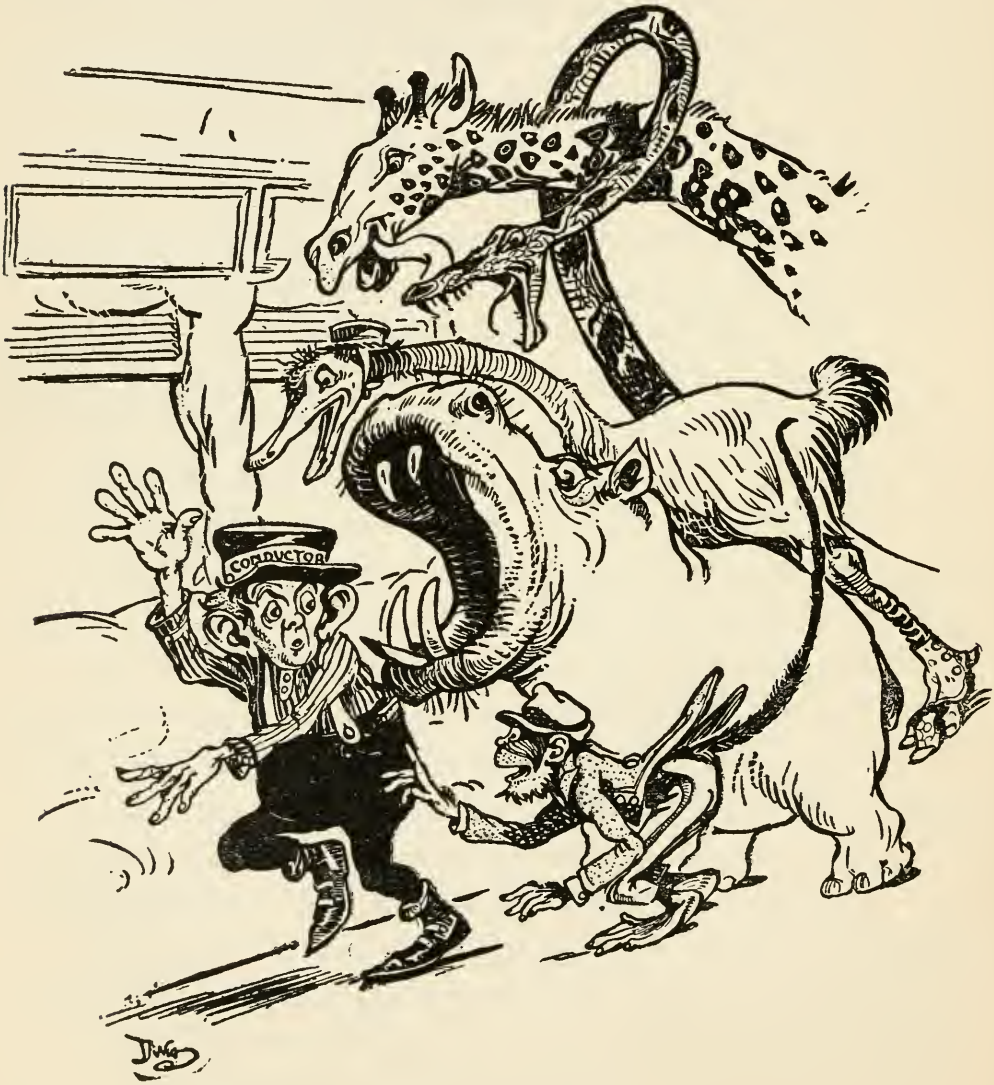
"Oh, pay your fare and shut up," growled the Polar Bear. "You began the row. What's the use?"

"Hear 'em quoting my poem," whispered the Poker to Tom.

"I've taken his number," said the Flamingo. "It's eight billion and seven. He's trying to beat his way."

"Pay up, pay up," came from all parts of the car, and before he knew it Tom found himself in the midst of an angry group surrounding the Conductor, insisting that he should pay his fare.

"Who are you that you should ride free?" demanded the Flamingo. "The idea of servants of the company having greater privileges than the patrons of the road!"



"I HAVEN'T THE MONEY."

"If you don't pay up right away," roared the Polar Bear, "I'll squeeze you to death."

"And I'll sit on you," put in the Hippopotamus.

"I haven't the money," cried the Conductor, now thoroughly frightened.

"Borrow it from the company," said the Polar Bear, "and ring it up."

This the Conductor did, and a moment later, having reached the station, rang the bell, and the car stopped.

"All out!" he cried, and the whole party descended.

"Who paid his fare, anyhow?" asked the Flamingo.

"I didn't," said the Monkey.

"No more did I," said the Hippopotamus. "The Kangaroo did, though. Didn't you, Kangy?"

"Only once," said the Kangaroo, "and that was the second time."

"Let's get away from this crowd," said the Bellows. "They're not honest."

"Right you are," said the Polar Bear. "They're a very bad lot. Come along; let's get aboard this toboggan, and leave 'em behind."

Whereupon Tom and his companions, accompanied by the Polar Bear, stepped aboard the waiting Oscycle, and were soon speeding down the upper incline of the Crescent Moon.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Oscycle—A Narrow Escape.

"WELL," said the Polar Bear, as the Oscycle started on its downward course: "I'm mighty glad we're off, and away from those other creatures on that Trolley. They were a dishonest lot."

"So am I," came a voice from behind him, that made the Bear jump nervously, for it was none other than the Flamingo.

"So are the rest of us," added a lot of voices in chorus, and Tom, turning to see who beside himself and his companions had got aboard, was hugely amused to see the Kangaroo, the Monkey, the Hippopotamus and all the other creatures from the Trolley, save only the conductor and motorman, seated there behind, as happy as you please.

"It doesn't pay to associate with conductors," said the Flamingo. "They don't think of anything but money all the time, and they're awfully rude about it sometimes. Why, I knew a conductor once who refused to change a $100 bill for me."

"I don't believe you ever had a $100 bill," growled the Hippopotamus.

"I've got one I wouldn't sell for $1,000," said the Flamingo. "It's the one I eat with," he added.

"That's not legal tender," said the Polar Bear.

"You couldn't change it if it was," sneered the Flamingo.



On the Oscycle.

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"I could change it in a minute if I wanted to," said the Polar Bear, with a chuckle.

"What with, cash?" demanded the Flamingo, scornfully.

"No—with one whack of my paw," said the Bear, shaking his fist menacingly at the Flamingo. "I could change your whole face, for that matter," he added, with a frown.

"I was only fooling, Poley, old man," said the Flamingo, a trifle worried. "Of course you could, but you wouldn't, would you?"

"Not unless I had to," replied the Bear, "but, gee, aren't we just whizzing along. Are you cold, Tom?"

"Yes," said Tom, with a shiver, "just a little."

"Well, come sit next to me and I'll let you use my furs. I don't need 'em myself. I'm a pretty warm Bear, considering where I come from."

"Sit close, gentlemen," cried the man in charge of the Oscycle. "We're coming to a thank-you-marm. Look out! Look out! Hang together. By jove, there goes the Monkey."

And sure enough, off the Monkey flew as the Oscycle crossed the hump at an enormous rate of speed.

"Hi, there, you fellows," the Monkey shrieked, as he landed in the soft snow, "wait a minute. Hi, you! Stop! Wait for me!"

"Can't do it," roared the man in charge. "Can't stop—going too fast."

"But what am I going to doo-oo-oo?" shrieked the Monkey excitedly.

"Get inside of a snowball and roll down. We'll catch you on the way back," the Kangaroo yelled, and as they now passed out of

hearing of the monkey's voice no one knew how the little creature took the suggestion.

"I'm glad he's gone," said the Hippopotamus. "He was a nuisance—and I tell you I had a narrow escape. He had his tail wound around my neck a minute before. He might have yanked me off with him."

"Yanked you?" said the Old Gentleman from Saturn, gazing contemptuously at the Hippopotamus. "Bosh! The idea of a seven-pound monkey yanking a three-ton Hippopotamus!"

"What?" roared the man in charge. "A what how much which?"

"Three-ton," said the Old Gentleman from Saturn. "That's what he weighs. I know because he stepped on my toe getting off the Trolley."

"But it's against the law!" cried the Man in Charge. "We're not allowed to carry more than 1,000 pounds on these Machines."

"Humph!" laughed the Kangaroo. "It's very evident, Hippy, that you'll have to go way back and lose some weight."

"I can't help weighing three tons," said the Hippopotamus. "I'm built that way."

"That's all right," said the Man in Charge, wringing his hands in despair; "but you'll have to get off. If you don't we'll go over the edge." His voice rose to a shriek.

Tom's heart sank and he half rose up.

"Sit still," said the two Andirons, grabbing him by the arms. "We're in for it. We've got to take what comes."

"Right you are," said the Bellows. "Don't you bother, Tom We'll come out all right in the end."



"MY OWN PRIVATE ICEBERG."

"But what's the trouble, Mr. Man?" asked the Poker. "What's the Hippo's weight got to do with our going over the edge?"

"Why, can't you see?" explained the Man in Charge. "His 6,000 pounds pushing the machine along from behind there gives us just so much extra speed, and all the brakes in the world won't stop us now we've got going unless he gets off."

The announcement caused an immediate panic, and the Polar Bear began to cry like a baby.

"Oh, why did I ever come?" he moaned as the tears trickled down his nose and froze into a great icicle at the end of it. "When I might have stayed home riding around on my own private iceberg?"

"Stop your whimpering," said the Kangaroo. "Brace up and be a man."

"I don't want to be a man," blubbered the bear. "I'm satisfied to be a poor, miserable little Polar Bear."

"You've got to jump, Hippy," said the Flamingo. "That's all there is about it."

"Sir," replied the Hippopotamus solemnly, "I shall not jump It would ill comport with my dignity for me to try to jump as if I were merely a Kangaroo. No sir. Here I sit, firm as a rock. You might as well ask an elephant to dance a jig."

"We'll put you off if you don't get off of your own accord," roared the Polar Bear, bracing up, and removing the icicle from his nose he shook it angrily at the Hippopotamus.

"All right," said the Hippopotamus with a pleasant smile "All right. Has any gentleman brought a derrick along with him to assist in the operation? You don't happen to have a freight elevator in your pocket, do you, Mr. Kangaroo?"

"Pry him off, Poker," cried the Kangaroo.

"I would if I could," answered the Poker, mournfully. "But I'm not a crowbar."

"Well, then, all together here," shouted the Man from Saturn. "Line up and we'll shove him off."

There was a frantic rush at the stolid Hippopotamus in response to this suggestion, but they might as well have tried to batter down the rock of Gibraltar by hurling feathers against it, so firmly fixed in his seat was this passenger of outrageous weight.

"Come again, gentlemen," said the Hippopotamus suavely. "There's nothing better for the complexion than a good rub, and I assure you you have placed me under an obligation to you."

"Prod him with the icicle," said the Kangaroo to the Polar Bear.

"I am not to be moved by tears, even if they are frozen and sharpened to a point," laughed the Hippopotamus, as the Polar Bear did as he was told, smashing the icicle without so much as denting the Hippo's flesh.

"Well, if you won't jump, I will," said the Man from Saturn angrily. "If I'm hurt I'll take it out of your hide when we meet again."

"All right," retorted the Hippopotamus. "You'll have to get a steam drill and blast it out. By-by."

The man from Saturn jumped and landed head first in the snow, but whether he was hurt or not the party never knew, for their speed was now so terrific that he had barely landed before they whizzed past the bottom of the hill and up the other incline. It became clear, too, as they sped on that at such a fearful rate of progress nothing could now keep the Osycle from going over the edge, and the others began to lay plans for safety.



(86) THE MAN FROM SATURN JUMPED.

"I'm going to jump for a passing trolley cloud the minute we get to the edge," said the Kangaroo.

"I don't know what I shall do," sobbed the Polar Bear. "If I land on my feet I'll be all right, for they're big and soft, like sofa cushions, but if I land on my head—"

"That's softer yet, Poley," laughed the Flamingo, who appeared to be less concerned than anybody. "If you land on your head it will be just as if you fell into a great bowl of oatmeal, so you're all right."

"I'm not afraid for myself," said the Poker. "I can drop any distance without serious injury, being made of iron, and my friends, the Andirons, are equally fortunate. The Bellows, too, is comparatively safe. The worst that can happen to him is to have the wind knocked out of him. But—"

"It's Tom we're bothered about," said the Righthandiron, with an anxious glance at Lefty. "You see, we invited him to come off here with us, and—"

"Who is he, anyhow?" demanded the Flamingo, glancing at Tom in such a way that the youngster began to feel very uncomfortable.

"I'm a Dormouse," said Tom, remembering the agreement.

"Not for this occasion," put in the Poker. "This time you're a boy, and we've got to save you somehow or other and we'll do it, Tom, so don't be afraid."

"What kind of boy is he?" demanded the Flamingo. "One of these bean-snapping boys that go around shooting robins and hooking birds' eggs when they haven't anything else to do?"

"Not a bit of it," said Righty. "He never snapped a bean at a bird in all his life."

"Humph!" said the Flamingo. "I suppose he's been too busy pulling feathers out of peacocks' tails to decorate his room with to be bothering with robins and eggs."

"Never did such a thing in all my born days," retorted Tom indignantly.

"Probably not," sneered the Flamingo. "And why? Because you were so well satisfied keeping a canary locked up in a cage for your own pleasure that you hadn't any time to chase peacocks."

"I've lived in the family forty years," said the Righthandiron, "and to my knowledge there was never a caged bird in the house."

"Really?" said the Flamingo, looking at Tom with interest. "Rather a new kind of boy this. Very few boys have a good record where birds are concerned."

"Tom's no enemy to birds," observed the Bellows. "I know that because I've been in his family longer than he has, and I've watched him."

"Well," said the Flamingo, "if that's the case, maybe I can help him. One good turn deserves another. If he is good to birds I may be able at this time to do good to him. This trouble ahead of us doesn't bother me, because I have wings and can fly—" Here the Flamingo flapped his wings proudly—"and I could take Tom on my back and fly anywhere with him, for I am an extremely powerful bird. But I want to know one more thing about him before I undertake to save him. We birds must stand together, you know, and I'm not going to befriend a foe to my kind under any circumstances. Thomas!"

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In a moment he was sitting astride the great bird's neck.

"Yes, sir," replied Tom, all of a tremble, for he hadn't the slightest idea what was coming, and as a truthful boy he knew that whatever the consequences to himself might be he must give the correct answer.

"Do you have Sunday breakfast at home?" asked the Flamingo.

"Yes, sir," Tom replied respectfully.

"You have coffee and hominy and toast and fried potatoes and all that?" queried the bird.

"Yes, sir," Tom answered, turning very pale, however, for he was in great dread of what he now saw was likely to come next.

"And—ah—fruit?" said the Flamingo.

"Oh, yes, plenty of fruit," replied Tom very nervously.

"And now, sir," said the Flamingo, severely, and ruffling his feathers like an angry turkey, "now for the main point. Thomas—and, mind you I want a truthful answer. Did you ever eat a broiled —Flamingo for your Sunday morning breakfast?"

Tom breathed a sigh of relief as the Flamingo blurted out the last part of his question.

"No, sir. Never!" he replied.

"Then hurry and climb up on my shoulders here," the Flamingo cried. "You're a boy after my own heart. I believe you'd be kind to a stuffed parrot. But hurry—there's the edge right ahead of us. Jump—"

Tom jumped and in a moment was sitting astride of the great bird's neck. In his right hand he grasped the claw of Righty, in his left that of Lefty, while these two clutched tightly hold of the Bellows and the Poker respectively. A moment later the Oscycle reached the edge and dashed wildly over it, the Kangaroo following out his

plan of jumping higher still and fortunately for himself catching a passing trolley cloud by which he was borne back to the starting point again.

As for the Polar Bear and the Hippopotamus, they plunged out into space, while the group comprising our little party from home and the Flamingo soared gracefully back to earth again, where the generous-hearted bird deposited them safely on top of the most convenient Alp.

"Thanks very much," said Tom, as he clambered down from the bird's neck and stood upon solid ground again.

"Don't mention it," said the Flamingo. "It's a pleasure to serve a bird-defender and his friends," and with this he soared away.

"I'm glad he didn't ask me if I ever ate broiled chicken for Sunday breakfast," said Tom.

"Why?" asked the Poker. "Do you?"

"Do I?" cried Tom. "Well, I guess. I don't do anything else."

CHAPTER X.

Home Again

"AND now," said the Lefthandiron as the Flamingo flew off and left them to themselves, "it strikes me that it is time we set about having some supper. I'm getting hungry, what with the excitement of that ride, and the fact I haven't eaten anything but a bowlful of kindling wood since yesterday morning."

"I'm with you there," said Tom. "I've been hungry ever since we started and that snow on the moon whetted my appetite."

"Never knew a boy who wasn't hungry on all occasions," puffed the Bellows. "Fact is, a boy wouldn't be a real boy unless he was hungry. Did you ever know a boy that would confess he'd had enough to eat, Pokey?"

"Once," said Poker, "I wrote a poem about him, but I never could get it published. Want to hear it?"

"Very much," said Tom.

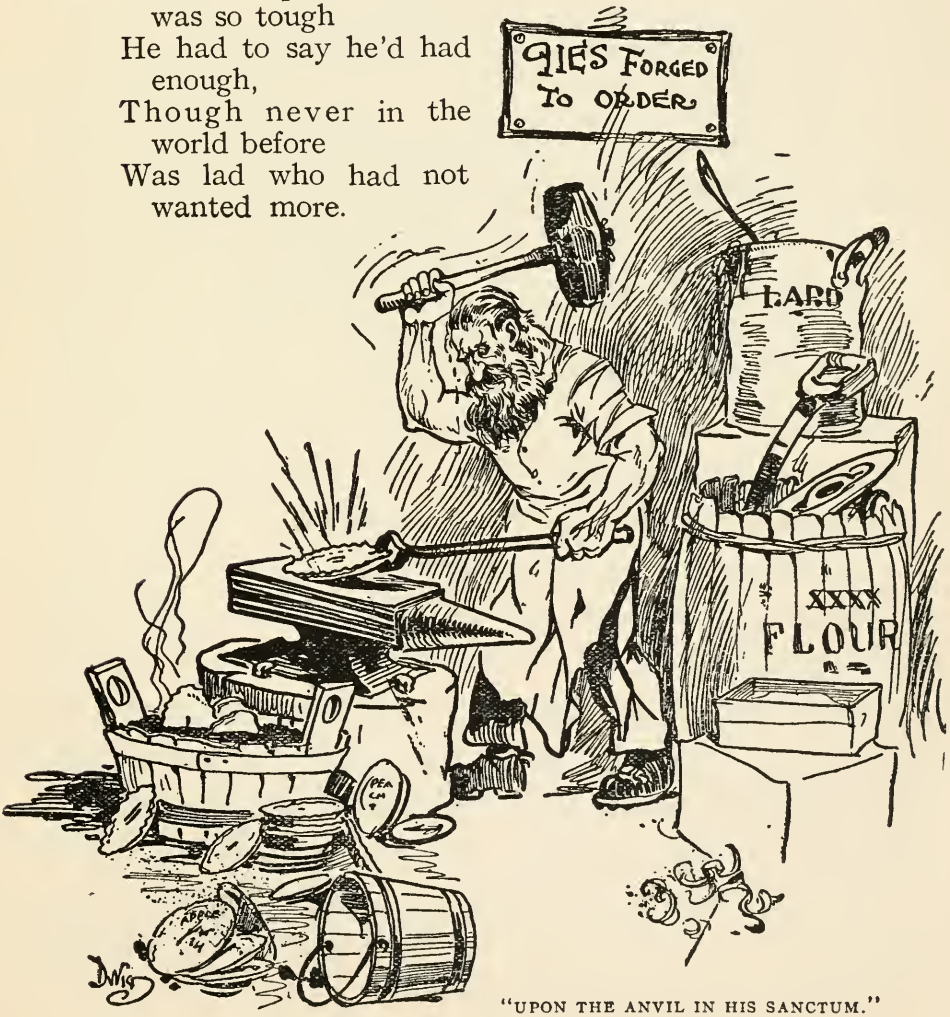
"Well, here goes," said the Poker anxiously, and he recited the following lines:

THE WONDROUS STRIKE OF SAMMY DIKE.

Young Sammy Dike was a likely boy
Who lived somewhere in Illinois,
His father was a blacksmith, and
His Ma made pies for all the land.
The pies were all so very fine

That folks who sought them stood in line
Before the shop of Dike & Co.,
'Mid passing rain, in drifting snow,
For fear they'd lose the tasty prize
Of "Dike's new patent home-made pies."
One day, alas, poor Mrs. Dike,
Who with her pies had made the strike,
By overwork fell very ill,
And all her orders could not fill.
So ill was she she could not bake
One-half the pastry folks would take;
And so her loving husband said
He'd take her place and cook, instead
Of making horse-shoes. Kindly Joe,
To help his wife in time of woe!
He worked by night, he worked by day—
Yet worked, alas, in his own way
And made such pies, I've understood,
As but a simple blacksmith could.
He made them hard as iron bars;
He made them tough as trolley cars.
He seemed to think a pie's estate
Was to be used as armor plate.
And not a pie would he let go
That had not stood the sledge's blow
Upon the anvil in his sanctum,
Whence naught went out until he'd spanked 'em.
Result? With many alas and 'lack
The pies Joe made they all came back.
From folks who claimed they could not go
The latest pies of Dike & Co.
And here it was that Sammy came
To help his parents in the game.
"Can't eat 'em?" cried indignant Joe.
"Can't eat 'em? Well, I want to know!
Here, Sammy, show these people here
How most unjust their plaint, my dear.
Come, lad, and eat the luscious pies
That I have made and they despise."
Poor loyal Sammy then began

Upon those stodgy pies—the plan
Was very pleasing in his eyes,
For Sammy loved his mother's pies.
He nibbled one, he bit another,
And then began to think of mother.
He chewed and gnawed, he munched and bit,
But no—he could not swallow it;
And then, poor child, it
was so tough
He had to say he'd had
enough,
Though never in the
world before
Was lad who had not
wanted more.



"UPON THE ANVIL IN HIS SANCTUM."

And what became of Sammy's Ma?
And what became of Sammy's Pa?
Their profits gone, how could they eke
A living good from week to week?
They took the recipe for pies
That mother made and—Oh, so wise—
Let Father make them in his way
In form elliptical, they say.
And when the football season came
Won fortune great, and wondrous fame,
Beyond the wildest hope of dreams,
By selling these to football teams.
And those by whom this game is played
Called them the finest ever made.
"The Shuregood football" made of mince,
Has never quite been equaled since;
And few who kick them with their feet,
Know they're the pies Sam couldn't eat—
The only pies upon this orb
A healthy boy could not absorb.

'Great poem that, eh?" said the Bellows, poking Tom in the ribs, and grinning broadly.

"Splendid," said Tom. "New use for pies, that."

"It's beautifully long," said Lefty.

"But why couldn't it be published?" asked Righty. "Wasn't it long enough?"

"The editor said it wasn't true," sighed the Poker. "He had three boys of his own, you know, and he said there never was a boy who couldn't eat a pie even if it was made of crowbars and rubber, as long as it was pie."

"I guess he was right." observed Righty. "I knew a boy once who ate soft coal just because somebody told him it was rock-candy."

"Did he like it?" asked Tom.

"I don't think he did," replied Righty, "but he never let on that he didn't."

"Well, anyhow," put in Lefty, "it's time we had something to eat and we'd better set out for the Lobster shop or the Candydike—I don't care which."

"Or the what?" asked Tom.

"The Candydike?" said the Leftandiron. "Didn't you ever hear of the Candydike?"

"Never," responded Tom. "What is it?"

"It's a candy Klondike," explained the Lefthandiron. "There are Gumdrop Mines and Marshmallow Lodes and Deposits of Chocolate Creams beyond the dreams of avarice. Remember 'em, Righty?"

"Oom, mh, mh!" murmured Righty, smacking his lips with joy. "Do I remember them! O, my! Don't I just. Why, I never wanted to come back from there. I had to be pulled out of the Peppermint mine with a derrick. And the river—O, the river. Was there anything ever like it?"

Tom's mouth began to water, he knew not why.

"What about the river?" he asked.

"Soda water flowing from Mountain to the Sea," returned the Righthandiron, smacking his lips again ecstatically. "Just imagine it, Tom. A great stream of Soda Water fed by little rivulets of Vanilla and Strawberry and Chocolate syrup, with here and there a Cream brook feeding the combination, until all you had to do to get a glass of the finest nectar ever mixed was to dip your cup into the river and there you were."

Tom closed his eyes with very joy at the mere idea.

"O—where is this river?" he cried, when he was able to find words to speak.

"In the Candydike, of course. Where else?" said the Poker. "But of course we can go to the Lobster shop if you prefer."

"Not I," said Tom. "I don't care for any Lobster shop with a Candydike in sight."

"Don't be rash," said the Bellows, who apparently had a strong liking for the Lobster shop. "Of course we all love the Candydike because it is so sweet, but for real pleasure the Lobster shop is not to be despised. I don't think you ought to make up your mind as to where you'll go next in too much of a hurry."

"What's the fun in the Lobster shop?" asked Tom.

"Purely intellectual, if you know what that means," said the Bellows. "You get your mind filled there instead of your stomach. You meet the wittiest oysters, and the most poetic clams, and the most literary lobsters at the Lobster shop you ever saw. For my part I love the Lobster shop. I can get something to eat anywhere. I can get a stake at any lumber yard in town. I can get a chop at any ax factory in the country, and if I want sweets I can find a Cakery—"

"Bakery, you mean?" said Tom.

"No, I don't at all," said the Bellows. "I mean Cakery. A Cakery is a place where they sell cake, and when I say Cakery I mean what I say. Just because you call it Bakery doesn't prove anything."

"We're out for pleasure, not for argument," growled the Left-handiron. "Go on and say what you've got to say."

"Well," said the Bellows, "what I was trying to say, when interrupted, was that you can get your stomach filled almost anywhere, but your mind—that is different. I'm hungrier in my mind than in my stomach, and I'd rather be fed just now on the jests of an oyster, the good stories of a clam and the anecdotes of a Lobster, than have the freedom of the richest marshmallow mine in creation."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what to do," said Tom, very much perplexed. The Candydike was glorious, but the Lobster shop, too, had its attractions, for Tom was fond of witty jokes and good anecdotes. The idea of having them from the lips of lobsters and oysters was very appealing.

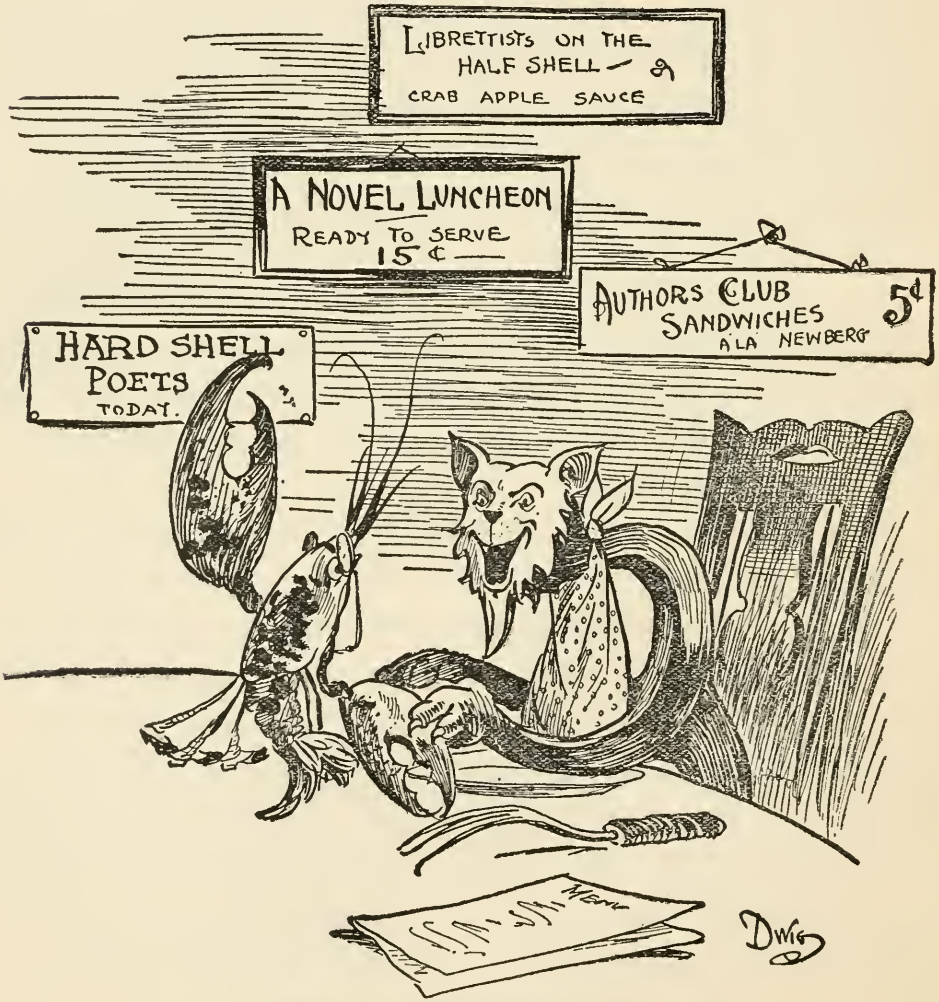
"I say," he said in a minute, "why isn't the Lobster shop the best place for us to go after all, if we are really hungry? We could sit down at the table, you know, and listen to the Lobster's anecdotes, and then eat him afterward. In that way we could hear the stories and fill up beside."

"Well—I de-clare!" cried the Bellows. "What an idea! You most ungrateful boy!"

"Not at all," said the Poker. "Not at all. It's merely the habit of his kind. Many's the time when I've heard of men and women devouring their favorite authors. Tom couldn't better show his liking for the lobster than by eating him. On the other hand, if he goes there and turns his back on the Candydike he'll miss the most wonderful sight in all creation, and that is the Nesselrode Cataract on the Soda Water river. It is located at the point where the Vanilla glacier comes down from the Cream mountains on the one side, and the famous Marrons orchards line the other bank for a distance of seven miles. It's a perfectly gorgeous sight."

"Mercy me!" cried Tom. "Indeed, I should like to see that."

"No doubt," put in the Bellows. "Nevertheless, you can see Nesselrode pudding at home at any time, but did you ever see there a Turtle that can recite a fairy story of his own composition or a



DEVOURING HIS FAVORITE AUTHOR.

Crab capable of narrating the most thrilling story of the American revolutionary war that anybody ever dreamed of?''

"O dear, O dear, O dear!'' said Tom. "What shall I do?''

As he spoke, from far down in the valley there seemed to come a crash and a roar, following close upon which the barking of a dog made itself heard.

"The ice is slipping,'' cried the Poker, as the mountain trembled beneath them. "There's going to be an avalanche, and we're on it!''

The whole top of the mountain shook as if it had been in an earthquake, and then it began to crash rapidly downward.

"Dear me! How annoying,'' observed the Bellows. "As if we haven't had enough coasting this trip without taking a turn on an avalanche.''

"But what shall we do?'' roared the Andirons excitedly. "I never foresaw this.''

"Slide, I guess,'' said the Poker calmly. "It's all we can do.''

The barking of the dog approached closer.

"Good!'' cried Righty, clapping his claws together gleefully, as an idea flashed across his mind. "It's one of those famous St. Bernards; he'll take care of Tom, and as for us—''

The thunderous roar of the descending avalanche drowned the sounds of Righty's voice, and all that could now serve as a means of conveying their thoughts to each other was the making of wild motions with the hands. The Poker stood erect and stiff, looking grimly ahead of him, as if resolved to meet his fate bravely; the Bellows threw himself flat upon the glacier and panted; while the two Andirons, standing guard on either side of Tom, peered anxiously

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about for the rescuer of their little guest, nor did they look in vain, for in a few moments the huge figure of a St Bernard appeared below them, rushing with all his might and main to their side. For some reason or other, the St Bernard seemed to have something familiar about him, but Tom couldn't quite say what it was.

"Bow-wow-wow!" the dog barked gleefully, for this was just the sort of work he most enjoyed.

Strangely enough, Tom seemed to understand dog language for the first time in his life, for the bark said to him as plainly as you please: "Climb on my back sonny, and I'll have you out of this in a jiffy."

The lad lost not a moment in obeying. Aided by the affectionate boosts of the Andirons he soon found himself lying face downward upon the broad, shaggy back of the faithful beast.

He closed his eyes to shut out the blinding snow for a moment, and then—

Tom sat up and rubbed them, for there was no snow, no avalanche, no Alp, no St. Bernard dog in sight. Only a friendly pair of andirons staring fixedly at him out of the fireplace of his father's library: the poker standing like a grenadier at one side, and the bellows, hanging from a brass-headed nail on the other. Beside these, lying on the rug beside him, his head cocked to one side, his eyes fixed intently upon Tom's face, and his tail wagging furiously, was Jeffy, not a St Bernard, but a shaggy little Scotch terrier.

"Hello, Jeffy!" said Tom, as he rubbed his eyes a second time. "Where have you been all this time?"



"Was it you who rescued me from the avalanche?"

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"Woof!" barked Jeff, and cocking his eye knowingly.

"And was it you who rescued me from the avalanche?" Tom asked.

"Woof!" replied Jeff, as much as to say he wouldn't tell.

"Well, it was mighty good of you, if you did, Jeffy," Tom said, gratefully. "Only I wish you could have taken me to the Candy-dike or the Lobster shop instead of straight home—because I'm not only hungry Jeffy, but I should very much have liked to visit those wonderful places."

"Woof!" said Jeffy.

Which Tom took to be a promise that his rescuer would do better next time.

The little party has not been off again since, but the other night some pieces of newspaper were thrown into the fire place and all but one of them were burned. Righty held this one under his claw and Tom, while trying to get a word out of his friend, caught sight of it.

"Hello," said Tom, as he read what was printed on the clipping. "The astronomers at the Lick observatory have discovered a new constellation in the southeast heavens. It is of huge dimensions and resembles in its outlines the figure of a rhinoceros or some such pachydermatous creature."

"Well, I never!" he cried, as he read. "I say, Righty, do you believe that's the old Hippopotamus?"

And Righty said never a word, but the look in his eye indicated that he thought there was something in the notion.



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